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ABSTRACT

This set of training materials is part of a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) project to help schools and teachers throughout the world respond to pupils with special needs. Four modules comprise the materials, which are designed to be appropriate as part of preservice training, an inservice workshop, or a school-based staff development program. Module 1, "An Introduction to Special Needs in the Classroom," covers principles of effective instruction and self-evaluation by the participant. Module 2, "Special Needs: Definitions and Responses," has units on defining special needs, the school role, inclusive schools, disabilities, attitudes to disability, perspectives on disability, integration, and needs of teachers. Module 3, titled "Towards Effective Schools for All," contains units on assessing and recording progress, making learning meaningful, changing practices, classroom factors, cooperative learning, structuring group activities, reading, and problem solving. The final Module, "Help and Support," covers the social climate of the classroom, problem behavior, peer tutoring, partnership teaching, sharing classrooms, the parent teacher relationship, community involvement, and cooperation with external agencies. Each module begins with study material to be read by course participants and then presents a variety of suggested activity units, usually involving active learning and group work. (DB)

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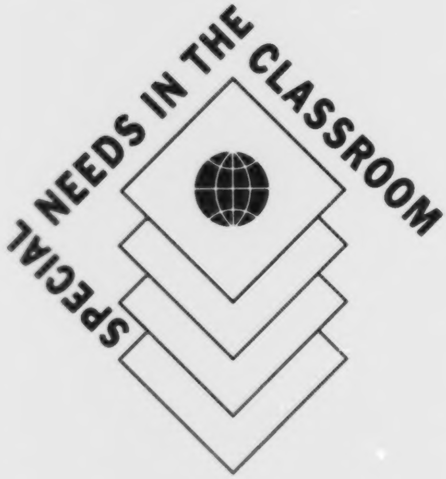
SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

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Student materials

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Foreword

This UNESCO Resource Pack has been developed with the help of many people. I see its production as a long, on-going journey. The journey began with a small group of colleagues exploring ways of helping teachers to respond to special needs in their classrooms. As the journey progressed, this small group expanded as they made new friends who were interested in similar issues. Indeed, the creation of partnerships for the purpose of extending thinking and improving practice has come to be the central strategy within the project that led to the creation of this pack.

Today, throughout the world, members of this international network of partners are using the Resource Pack as a basis for teacher education initiatives. At the time of writing, the pack is being used in over thirty countries and is being translated into many languages.

As new partners join our network, I hope they will keep in mind the idea of the journey. In this respect the materials in the pack are intended to provide supplies that may be needed along the way. As such they should be used flexibly, taking account of local conditions and circumstances. They should also be modified and improved in the light of experience. The pack is meant in this way to stimulate and support progress towards forms of schooling that can facilitate the learning of all children in the community.

Lena Saleh
UNESCO

Users of this pack are informed that there is a 'Special Needs in the Classroom: Teacher Education Guide' which goes with this material, as well as three videos: Information Video, Training Video, and Inclusive School. These are on sale and available upon request.

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Acknowledgements

This pack was developed by an international resource team. The members of the team are:

Anupam Ahuja	India
Mel Ainscow	United Kingdom
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Zuhair Zakaria	Jordan

The team acknowledges the contributions of teachers and teacher educators from many countries throughout the world. These materials are a tribute to a remarkable example of international collaboration in which colleagues from different cultures have worked together in the interests of all children.

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Introduction to the resource pack

These student materials are part of a UNESCO project to help schools and teachers respond to pupils with special needs. The materials are intended to be used flexibly to fit in with different situations. They may, for example, be used as:

1 Part of an initial training course for teachers

2 An in-service workshop for experienced teachers

3 The basis of a school-based staff development programme.

The materials consist of four modules as follows:

Module 1	An introduction to 'Special Needs in the Classroom'
Module 2	Special needs: Definitions and responses
Module 3	Towards effective schools for all
Module 4	Help and support

Each module commences with Study Material which should be read by all the participants in a course or workshop. This is then followed by Units that form the basis of particular sessions.

Module 1 provides students with an overview of the project, including an explanation of the principles around which it has been developed. It also includes an explanation of how the sessions are to be conducted, including strategies for continuous evaluation by participants.

The material used in all four modules requires some form of active learning, usually involving group work. Where written materials are studied these are usually read by participants before the course session and then used as a basis of some form of group activity. Little use is made of formal lecture inputs although course leaders or participants may add their own inputs to course sessions as appropriate. It is assumed that those co-ordinating a course or workshop will have participated in a training experience related to this resource pack. They must also have access to a copy of the notes for course leaders available from UNESCO.

Finally those using the pack should be sensitive to the constraints faced by teachers. Whilst the aim is to help all teachers to be more successful in responding to pupil diversity, it is important to remember that this is not always so easy in situations where there are large classes, limited resources, or policies that limit the capacity to work flexibly.

Mel Ainscow

SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Module 1

An introduction to 'Special needs in the classroom'

Contents of this Module

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Discussion Material

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Unit 1.2 A policy for evaluation 18
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Guide

This study material provides an introduction to the 'Special Needs in the Classroom' project. It explains a little about how the project materials were developed and how they are intended to be used. The project is based upon a number of strategies that have been found to be successful in helping teachers to develop their thinking and practice. These strategies can be used in all classrooms whether the students are adults or children. Also included in this study material is an outline of all the modules and units in this resource pack. This can be used in order to decide which sections of the pack are relevant to particular groups of participants.

Introduction

This resource pack is part of a project developed by UNESCO to help schools and teachers in different parts of the world to respond to children who experience difficulties in school. It is expected that the materials will be used in many different ways to make them suitable for different national contexts. Consequently the emphasis is on flexibility. Use the materials in whatever ways seem sensible to you and your colleagues.

The project materials were developed with the help of teachers and teacher educators in many different countries. So, whilst they were co-ordinated by one author, the ideas and experiences of many people are reflected in the text.

In this study material we will look at the background to the project including the aims and features of the materials, and then make some suggestions as to their use.

The development of the project

The project 'Special Needs in the Classroom' was initiated by UNESCO in 1988. The aim was to develop a resource pack of ideas and materials that could be used by teachers and teacher educators in different parts of the world. The concern was with helping ordinary schools to respond positively to pupil diversity.

The initiative for the project grew out of UNESCO's continuing work in encouraging member states to develop strategies for responding to children's special needs in ordinary schools. A survey of fourteen countries, commissioned by UNESCO and carried out by a research team from the University of London, identified three major priorities for policy development. These were:

1. The provision of compulsory education for all children in the population;
2. The integration of pupils with disabilities into ordinary schools; and
3. The upgrading of teacher training as a means of achieving the first two priorities.

The findings of this survey were used as the basis of a series of regional workshops. An outcome of these events was that UNESCO was urged to assist in the dissemination of teacher training materials that could be used to facilitate improvements with respect to meeting special needs in ordinary schools. The regional workshops also generated more specific recommendations as to the content and emphasis to be placed within any materials that might be produced.

Clearly the design of suitable teacher education materials represented an enormous challenge. In particular there was the central issue of how to produce a pack that would be relevant to and take account of such a wide range of national contexts, especially those in developing countries. This being the case a number of measures were taken during the formulation of the materials in order to achieve a level of flexibility that could take account of diverse settings. These were as follows:

- A pilot workshop for teachers and teacher educators from various African countries was held in Nairobi, Kenya in April 1989. This allowed various materials and approaches to be evaluated.
- Further trials were carried out in Turkey during September 1989.

- Advisory teams consisting of teacher educators and teachers were created in different parts of the world. These teams provided comment on draft materials and contributed materials and ideas of their own for inclusion in the pack.
- Special educators and others involved in teacher development around the world read and commented upon draft materials.
- An international resource team was created to field-test and evaluate pilot materials. This team is also involved in the further development of the materials.

In April 1990 two co-ordinators from each of eight countries (i.e. Canada, Chile, India, Jordan, Kenya, Malta, Spain and Zimbabwe) took part in a two-week workshop/seminar at the University of Zimbabwe. The group included university lecturers, educational administrators, teachers and one headteacher. The first week took the form of a demonstration workshop during which materials from the resource pack were used to conduct a series of course sessions for the co-ordinators and a further group of local teachers and student teachers. In the second week, the demonstrated workshop was evaluated during a seminar in which the international co-ordinators planned together the ways in which they would field-test the resource pack in their own countries.

This field-testing was completed by March 1991 and each team of co-ordinators prepared an evaluation report about their work. The main aim of the field-testing was to gather information that could be used to inform the further development of the resource pack and to plan its future dissemination.

In this way, it was possible to develop the 16 co-ordinators into an international resource team who are now collaborating with colleagues in many countries in the promotion of the project.

The evaluation reports indicate that in all of the field-testing sites the materials were used as intended and that course leaders worked in ways that were consistent with the thinking of the project. The reports reflect a sense of acceptance and optimism about the approaches that were used. Overall, the evidence supports the view that the content of the materials in the resource pack was appropriate for teachers in each of these national contexts, focusing on issues that they found meaningful and relevant. Furthermore it seems that the activities and processes used are successful in helping teacher educators and, in turn, teachers to develop their thinking and practice.

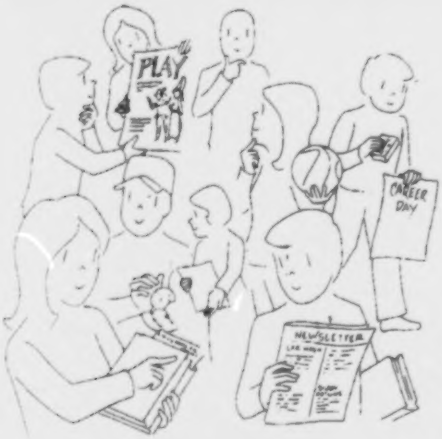
The design of the project materials

In the light of the account of the development of the resource pack you will recognize that designing suitable teacher education material for the project has presented many difficulties. How can such materials be relevant to such a wide range of countries?

As you will see this issue is addressed in the materials by adopting a series of approaches that are emphasised throughout the project. Indeed the assumption is made that these approaches apply in all teaching and learning situations, whether this is the lecture room in a college, an in-service workshop for experienced teachers, or the classrooms of your school.

Consequently these approaches will guide your participation in this project. We hope that you will also adopt them in teaching the pupils in your classes.

Learning is more likely to occur where there is: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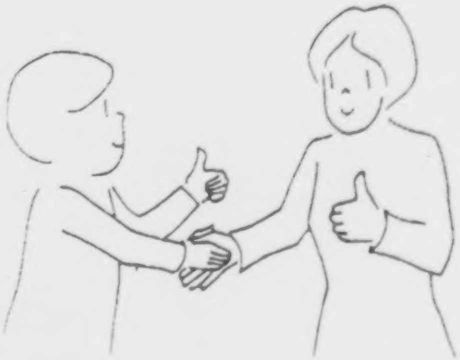
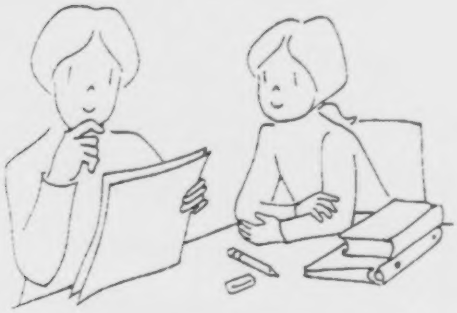
NEWSLETTER

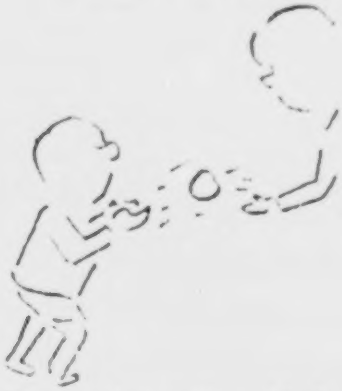
Active learning



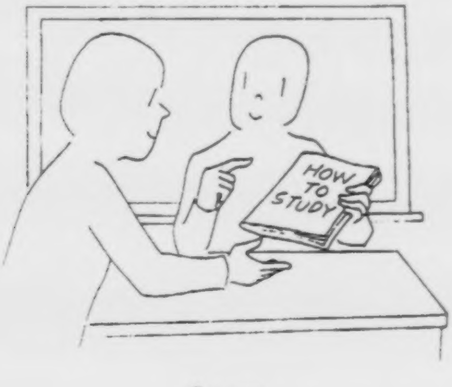
Negotiation of objectives



Continuous evaluation



Demonstration, practice and feedback


HOW TO STUDY

Support

Put simply the approaches are as follows:

Learning is more likely to occur in classrooms where there is:

1 *Active learning*

i.e. Approaches that encourage participants to engage with opportunities for learning.

2 *Negotiation of objectives*

i.e. Approaches that enable activities to take account of the concerns and interests of individual participants.

3 *Demonstration, practice and feedback*

i.e. Approaches that model examples of practice, encourage their use and provide opportunities for feedback.

4 *Continuous evaluation*

i.e. Approaches that encourage enquiry and reflection as ways of reviewing learning.

5 *Support*

i.e. Approaches that help individuals to take risks.

Let us look at each of these five points in turn, particularly with respect to teacher education. As we do so, keep in mind possible implications for your own classroom.

1 *Active involvement*

Active approaches to learning, in which course participants work collaboratively to develop their skills and understanding, and solve common problems, have many advantages over traditional approaches to teacher education. In particular they encourage involvement and help individuals overcome some of the fears associated with change. Throughout your involvement in this project, therefore, you will find yourself asked to work with other people. We believe that this will help you to learn by sharing with others. We also think it will make learning an enjoyable experience.

2 *Negotiation of objectives*

Each participant has their own ideas, experiences and concerns. Consequently it is necessary to allow individuals to work out their own priorities, their own learning objectives. It may well be, that these objectives change as a result of reading the various study materials and participating in the related activities.

3 *Demonstration, practice and feedback*

Research evidence suggests that the introduction of new ways of working into schools is more likely if these three elements, demonstration, practice and feedback, are used collectively. Throughout this project, therefore, you will have opportunities to see teaching approaches demonstrated, to practice them yourself and to receive helpful comment on your attempts. To help with this you will be encouraged to work in collaboration with your colleagues.

4 *Continuous evaluation*

Since we will be wanting you to determine your own learning objectives within this project, it also makes sense for you to take responsibility for monitoring progress. We believe that this will encourage you to make greater effort to improve your practice. Our aim is to get you to see yourself as a learner, learning alongside the pupils in your classroom. We also want the process of continuous evaluation to be used as a means of influencing the course activities and priorities. In this way the course should be helpful to individual participants.

5 *Support*

Finally, throughout this project, whether within the context of pre-service or in-service teacher education, emphasis will be placed on the importance of support within the classroom. Learning can be a stressful business for students and teachers. If this stress becomes too great, learning will be less likely. Classrooms that are characterized by support help all participants, teachers and students, to learn more effectively.

The implication of these five approaches is that you as a participant in this project will have a lot to do. Indeed the main purpose is to help you to 'take responsibility for your own learning'. This is a useful motto that you should keep in mind.

Points to consider

- What do you feel about these five approaches?
- Do you use any of these approaches with the classes you teach?

Content

The design of the project materials was influenced by the evidence of the survey of fourteen countries summarized above, the views expressed at the various regional workshops and experience of other teacher education initiatives. They were then rewritten as a result of the field-testing and research in eight countries. The overall aim is as follows:

To help teachers to develop their thinking and practice with respect to the ways in which they respond to educational difficulties.

As was said on erlier, the materials should be used flexibly to take account of different national contexts and to meet the individual needs of course participants.

In general terms it is assumed that they are likely to be used in one of the following contexts:

1. Initial teacher training courses held in colleges or universities.
2. In-service courses or workshops for groups of experienced teachers.
3. As part of school-based staff development programmes for all members of staff within a particular school.

Throughout the project material emphasis is placed on seeing special needs as a curriculum issue. In other words, whilst it is assumed that educational difficulties occur because of the interaction of a range of factors, our responsibility as teachers must be to provide the conditions that will help all children to learn. Recognition of this leads to a more optimistic frame of mind. It means that what teachers do, the decisions they make, the experiences they provide, and the relationships they have with their pupils, all have a major influence on children's progress in schools.

This approach also takes account of possible dangers associated with the idea of labelling. Instead of grouping some children together because they are seen as being in some way 'special', we should recognize that all children are special. Consequently our aim must be to respond to all pupils as individuals, recognizing individuality as something to be respected. It would surely be a sad world if everybody were the same!

All of this means that instead of providing separate learning experiences for groups of special children, teachers in ordinary schools should be seeking effective ways of providing a common curriculum that takes account of individual pupil variations. This is the topic you will be considering as you read the study materials and participate in course activities with your colleagues.

Points to consider

- Do you believe that all children are special?
- Is it possible to provide a common curriculum for all children?

Finding your way around the course materials

The four Modules consist of Study Material that provides an overall introduction to the topic and a series of Units that form the basis of activities within the course. Normally you will be expected to read some introductory notes relating to a particular Unit before the course session. This way the sessions can be made more active and, consequently, more learning should take place. The next few pages of this study material is an outline of the various Modules and Units in the pack. By reading these summaries you and your colleagues will be able to choose the sections that are most relevant. It is not expected that groups involved in a course or workshop will use all the materials in the resource pack. Rather you should work with those sections that are relevant to your work. In this way you can design a programme of activities that will be of maximum help.

Summary of the contents

Module 1
An introduction to 'Special needs in the classroom'

Study material 1

This material provides an introduction to the project, including an account of its development through a process of international collaboration and research. This led to the development of five approaches that make the materials associated with the project relevant to teachers in different countries. Courses and workshops based upon the materials have to be conducted in a flexible way in order to take account of the interests of individual participants. The aim is to encourage participants to take responsibility for their own learning.

Units in Module 1

1.1 *What do you expect?*

Participants are expected to determine their own learning objectives within the general aim of the course. This activity helps individuals to review their expectations.

1.2 *A policy for evaluation*

Continuous evaluation is seen as being a crucial part in the use of these materials. This unit provides some suggestions as to how this evaluation should be undertaken.

1.3 *Learning lessons*

This course is all about learning—children's learning and adult learning. The purpose of this unit is to help participants to think about themselves as learners.

1.4 *Looking at classrooms*

This unit begins the process of encouraging participants to review their own practice as teachers. It also helps in the refinement of learning objectives for the course.

1.5 *Children's learning*

In this unit participants continue thinking about learning. Here the concern is with the learning of children.

1.6 *School based inquiry*

Participants are expected to review areas of their own classroom practice. This unit provides advice on how to carry out such inquiries.

Module 2
Special needs: definitions and responses

Study material 2

This material provides an account of changes in thinking that are influencing developments in many countries. These changes redefine special needs in terms of the curriculum. They require teachers to develop their practice in order to help all pupils to learn. Pupils experiencing difficulty can be seen more positively as providing feedback on existing classroom arrangements. Improvements made in response to this feedback will be to the benefit of all pupils. Responding positively to special needs is a way of improving schools for all.

Units in Module 2

2.1 *Defining special needs*

Special needs are seen as arising from an interaction of a range of factors, some within the child, some in the community and, critically, others related to the responses of schools. This activity helps teachers to recognize these factors.

2.2 *What can schools do about special needs?*

This exercise is intended to pinpoint those factors in schools that influence pupil learning and which, therefore, can be manipulated to overcome difficulties.

2.3 *Inclusive schools*

Throughout the world there are examples of schools that are successful in responding positively to pupil diversity. Studying these schools can help us to develop our understanding.

2.4 *Dealing with disabilities*

Inevitably special needs occur when schools are unable to deal with children's disabilities. Child studies are used as a basis for considering strategies for dealing with disability in schools.

2.5 *Attitudes to disability*

This unit provides an opportunity to consider different attitudes to disability. It also helps individuals to review their own thinking.

2.6 *Perspectives on disability*

An exercise in which teachers have the opportunity to meet disabled adults and discuss their experiences in school. Visual aids may also be used to help participants to become familiar with people who have disabilities.

2.7 *Integration in action*

Using a series of stories written by teachers in different parts of the world, this unit begins to identify the important features of practice that are important for dealing with special needs in ordinary schools.

2.8 *Looking at integration*

Based on school visits, this unit continues the investigation into good practice in dealing with special needs.

2.9 *The needs of teachers*

Assuming a curriculum view of special need there has to be consideration of the professional needs of teachers. Teachers who feel confident in themselves are better placed to respond to difficulties experienced by their pupils. This unit looks at ways in which teachers should deal with personal stress.

Module 3
Towards effective schools for all

Study material 3

This material explores the practical implications of adopting a curriculum view of educational difficulties. The concern is on responding to individual pupils within a common curriculum rather than devising separate programmes. Given this argument the question is: How can teachers improve their practice with respect to ways of responding to individuals within a class? The emphasis is on learning from experience, using colleagues to provide support and stimulation in establishing a reflective attitude. This being the case there is also a need to establish strategies for evaluating classroom practice and responding on the basis of information collected. It is also very important to adopt a whole school policy that provides support to individual teachers.

Units in Module 3

3.1 *Assessing and recording progress*

What is recorded in a classroom tends to have a major impact on the curriculum provided. This unit looks at orientations to assessment and recording, and includes a consideration of some examples.

3.2 *Making learning more meaningful*

Difficulties in learning occur when pupils perceive the curriculum as being irrelevant or lacking in meaning. Principles of good curriculum practice are presented and used as a means of evaluating the appropriateness of provision made in the classrooms of course participants.

3.3 *Changing practice*

In this unit the issue of change in education is considered. If teachers are to develop their own practice, they need to recognize the difficulties they face and the conditions that facilitate change.

3.4 *Classroom factors*

This unit examines some of the methods teachers use to respond to individual pupils in their classes. These factors provide an agenda within which course participants can consider their own current practice.

3.5 *Analysing Classroom practice*

Using systematic observations of classroom practice this unit seeks to examine in more detail the factors that facilitate the progress of individual pupils.

3.6 *Co-operative learning*

There is increasing evidence to suggest that co-operative learning strategies are effective in helping pupils to achieve their academic goals. They can also facilitate the integration of exceptional pupils and encourage personal and social development.

3.7 *Structuring group activities*

Co-operative learning is only successful when group activities are planned to encourage positive interdependence between group members. This unit looks at practical strategies for using group learning in the classroom.

3.8 *Reading for learning*

Classroom reading material can cause particular difficulties for some children. This unit examines strategies for helping all pupils to read more effectively.

3.9 *Problem solving*

Whilst the main emphasis is on improving the curriculum there is still the occasional need to devise additional responses to help pupils overcome particular difficulties. This unit provides a framework for the development of such responses.

3.10 *Putting it together*

This unit provides an opportunity for participants to use ideas from the other units to devise, implement and evaluate a lesson plan.

Module 4
Help and support

Study material 4

Whilst the importance of self-help is stressed throughout this project, the value of support should not be underestimated. Effective teachers recognize the importance of developing a support network. In particular they are skilful in gaining help from their pupils, their colleagues, parents and others in the community, and, where available, external support agencies. Successful schools have a commitment to collaboration as a means of creating positive learning conditions for pupils and teachers.

Units in Module 4

4.1 *Social climate of the classroom*

Successful teachers create an atmosphere in their classrooms that encourage learning. Such an atmosphere also reduces disruption. This unit explores these issues.

4.2 *Problem behaviour*

This unit considers ways of responding to behaviour that interferes with learning. It builds upon the problem solving approach presented in Unit 3.9.

4.3 *Child-to-child*

This unit introduces participants to the thinking and practice of 'Child-to-child', an approach to peer tutoring that is used successfully in many parts of the world.

4.4 *Peer tutoring*

A range of strategies for encouraging children to help one another in the classroom are introduced in this unit, particularly paired reading.

4.5 *Partnership teaching*

There is considerable evidence to show the value of teachers collaborating to develop their practice. This has been shown to be a particularly powerful means of supporting individuals as they attempt to implement new ways of working in their classrooms.

4.6 *Sharing classrooms*

The presence of more than one adult in the classroom provides the basis for a more flexible range of responses to individual pupils. It can also present additional difficulties, however, particularly where the partnership is not well planned. This unit examines strategies for sharing classrooms successfully.

4.7 *Parents as partners*

Research has also shown the impact that parents can have upon the progress of their children. Seeing parents as partners in the process of learning is essential to this approach. Strategies for developing positive relationships between home and school are explored in this unit.

4.8 *Meeting parents*

Meetings between parents and teachers can be stressful for both groups. In this unit ways of making such meetings more positive will be examined.

4.9 *Community involvement*

This unit looks at the relationships between schools and the communities they serve. It is argued that successful education requires a shared understanding as to the purposes of the curriculum. On a more pragmatic level the resources of the wider community should be available as a source of support to teachers.

4.10 *External agencies*

Whilst the availability of external support agencies varies from area to area, it is important to recognize that the key issue is to make effective use of those that are available. This unit looks at strategies for setting up appropriate forms of communication with other professionals.

4.11 *Practice and feedback*

The materials in the resource pack 'Special Needs in the Classroom' can be used in a variety of settings, including as part of school development. This unit provides an opportunity for participants to practise using sections of the pack for teacher development activities.

Evaluating progress

To get the best out of your participation in this project you should try to take responsibility for your own learning. In particular you should:

1 *Listen*

Listening to the views of others is in itself an active learning process that will help you to develop your own ideas.

2 *Share*

Help the development of discussions within course sessions by contributing your own ideas and sharing your experiences.

3 *Challenge*

If you hear something said with which you disagree, or do not fully understand, you must speak up. In the same way you must expect your ideas to be challenged by others.

4 *Relate*

At all times you should attempt to relate course discussions to your own classroom, seeking to find ways of improving your own practice.

5 *Have fun!*

There is no evidence to suggest that learning has to be painful. By and large effective classrooms are places where students enjoy themselves.

In addition you should also contribute to the on-going evaluation of the course. Here there are two interrelated elements. They are:

1 The evaluation of your own progress;

2 The evaluation of the course as a whole.

Your course leader will discuss with you and the other participants a policy for organizing evaluation. Possible strategies that may be useful are as follows:

1 *Keeping a learning journal*

This is a personal diary in which you record your own objectives and write comments about your progress towards their achievement. You might also write occasional reflections on the course as a whole.

2 *Negotiated statements*

Here you and the course leader discuss and try to agree a written statement recording your progress so far.

3 *Group discussion*

You and your colleagues may meet on a regular basis in small groups to discuss progress. Summaries of conclusions are then read out to the whole course group.

You may think of other approaches that could be used to help with the process of evaluation. Whichever approaches are used it is important to remember that the main purpose of evaluation is one of improvement. (e.g. 'How can I achieve my objectives?' 'How can the course help me to achieve my objectives?'). Therefore, comments made should always aim to be positive and constructive, whether these are to do with the progress of individuals or, indeed, the course as a whole.

Module 1: Summary

The Special Needs in the Classroom materials are meant to help you to respond to educational difficulties. The content of the materials is based upon the following ideas:

Learning is more likely to occur in classrooms where there is:

1 Active involvement of learners

2 Negotiation of individual learning objectives

3 Opportunities for demonstration, practice and feedback

4 Continuous evaluation of learning

5 Support for learners and teachers.

This course will be based upon these ideas. The main purpose will be to help you to take responsibility for your own learning. In this way you will learn how to become a better teacher.

The six units that follow will help you to consider in more detail issues raised in the study material. Your course leader will explain how these units are to be dealt with.

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Unit 1.1

What do you expect?

Unit aim

To review the expectations of individual participants.

Activities

1 With a partner discuss what each of you would like to gain from this course.

2 Join up with another pair of course participants and explain to the other pair your expectations.

3 Form up with the other groups and agree a general list of course expectations. This list should be helpful in guiding the establishment of course priorities and activities.

Evaluation issues

1 What are your main priorities for the course?

2 What strategies will you adopt to ensure that you achieve these priorities?

Unit 1.2

A policy for evaluation

Unit aim

To agree on procedures for evaluating the course.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material, 'Evaluation and Learning'.

2 In small working groups formulate a possible policy for course evaluation. Such a policy should:

- help individuals monitor their own learning
- inform the course leader of matters related to the course in general
- provide support to all participants
- not take up too much time.

3 Present your proposal to the other groups and then together agree the policy that you propose to use.

(N.B. These negotiations may take some time. Remember, however, that this is a crucial part of the course which should help to ensure its success. The process of discussion may also help you to get to know more about the other participants.)

Evaluation issues

1 In the light of the agreed policy what actions do you need to take to evaluate your own learning?

2 What problems, if any, do you anticipate?

Evaluation and learning

Evaluation should be an important part of any learning experience, whether for adults or children. The major aim of evaluation should be to improve the quality of learning of all participants.

However, this aspect is often overlooked in teacher education programmes. Possible reasons for this are:

1. It may create a negative reaction from some participants.
2. There is sometimes confusion about the aims of evaluation.
3. The terminology and techniques associated with evaluation seem to be complex.
4. It is time-consuming.

During this course we wish to evaluate two interrelated aspects:

1. Your progress towards achieving the objectives you set for yourself; and
2. The ways in which the course is helping you to achieve these objectives.

Keeping these two issues in mind there is, therefore, a need to address the following questions in order to establish a policy for evaluation within the course:

- What information is needed?
- Who needs to know?
- Who should take responsibility?

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Unit 1.3

Learning lessons

Unit aim

To help participants to reflect upon themselves as learners.

Activities

1 This course is about learning—children's learning and adult learning. Thinking about ourselves as learners can help in two ways:

- we will get better at learning and at supporting the learning of our colleagues
- we will understand more about children as learners

2 Spend a few minutes thinking about yourself as an adult learner.
(For example, how did you learn to ride a bicycle or drive a car?
Can you remember learning to read?)

3 Working on your own complete the seven sentences on the attached paper.

4 Share your responses with another participant.

- What do they tell you about yourself as a learner?
- What implications are there for the way you teach your pupils?

5 Discuss your conclusion with the whole group.

Evaluation issues

1 What measures should you take to help yourself to learn successfully during this course?

2 Could these same measures help children in your classes?

Myself as a learner

Working on your own complete these sentences:

1 •*I learn slowly when* ....

....

....•

2 •*I learn quickly when* ....

....

....•

3 •*I find learning easy when* ....

....

....•

4 •*Learning in groups* ....

....

....•

5 •*Learning from books* ....

....

....•

6 •*I learn well from someone who* ....

....

....•

7 •*I enjoy learning when* ....

....

....•

Unit 1.4

Looking at classrooms

Unit aim

To provide an opportunity for participants to review their own classroom practice.

Activities

1 On your own, draw a picture of your own classroom. Try to show by illustration the things that you feel are important. This is not a test of your artistic ability so feel free to draw in whatever way you like. Use cartoons, colours or words to emphasize particular points if you wish. You may also like to talk to other course participants as you draw. The aim is to use drawing to help you to think about your own classroom.

2 With another participant talk about your picture. What are the problems that you face in your teaching? Try to agree a list of common issues and problems.

3 Form into groups of four and compare your lists of common issues and problems.

4 Finally discuss generally the points that have arisen from these activities with all the other course members.

Evaluation activities

1 What are the main problems about your classroom that have emerged from this activity?

2 What objectives are suggested that might be addressed during this course?

Unit 1.5

Children's learning

Unit aim

To help participants to think about children's learning.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material, 'What do we know about learning?'

2 Working on your own, look over the six statements about learning,and make some notes of examples that illustrate—or contradict—each statement. Use examples from your own experience as a learner, both now and in the past, and examples of children's learning in your workplace.

3 Working in small groups of four or five, discuss each of the statements and the examples you have noted with your colleagues. Think about the implications of each statement for your practice, and your workplace.

4 Working in the same groups of four or five, select one of the six statements and discuss how its message might be incorporated into your workplace. Make a poster that will illustrate the group message

5 Present your poster to the rest of the course participants.

Evaluation issues

1 What are the implications of these discussions for your classroom practice?

2 Are there particular aspects of your teaching that you might want to develop in the light of these discussions?

What do we know about learning?

1 *Learning is never complete*

Even as adults, our understanding continues to develop as we test our new ideas against previous knowledge. Old ideas can be changed in the light of new experiences.

2 *Learning is individual*

Even if a whole group of children—or adults—is exposed to the same experience, the learning that takes place will be different for each individual. This is because each individual, child or adult, brings to every situation a unique blend of previous experience.

3 *Learning is a social process*

Some learning takes place in a group. Sharing learning with others can be stimulating.

4 *Learning can be enjoyable*

This is something that many adults seriously doubt, when they think back to their own schooling. However, learning can be hard, and enjoyable at the same time. Even making mistakes can be part of the fun—how many times did you fall off when you learned to ride a bike?

5 *Learning is active*

Someone else can teach us, but no one else can do our learning for us. Learning requires our active engagement, in doing and talking.

6 *Learning means change*

The Chinese written character for change is a combination of the characters for pain and opportunities. As adults we are responsible for keeping the balance manageable for individual children. For us, too, learning may mean painful changes. Sometimes we need to let go of deeply held convictions. The challenge of change through learning may be experienced as exhilarating or as daunting. Often it is both.

This material is reproduced with permission from:
Drummond, M. J. et al. (1989). *Working with Children: Developing a Curriculum for the Early Years.* National Children's Bureau.

Unit 1.6

School based inquiry

Unit aim

To provide advice on collecting information to support teacher development activities.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Doing school based inquiry'
2. Choose one of the following topics and work with other group members to plan an inquiry:
    - Improving my skills in using questions
    - My use of group work
    - Attitudes of parents in my school
    - My classroom rules
    - The way I teach reading
3. Explain your plan to the other groups.

Evaluation issues

1. In what ways might you use school based inquiry to develop your teaching?
2. What problems do you anticipate?

Doing school-based inquiry

Inquiry is an essential way of becoming a better teacher. By gathering information as we teach we have a better picture of our own practice. Much of the information needed is collected in a natural way as we work with our pupils. Observing, talking and listening all help us to get feedback from our pupils in order to develop our practice as teachers.

Sometimes it helps to be slightly more specific in collecting information to help review aspects of teaching. Indeed some of the Units in this resource pack require a more detailed inquiry into areas of classroom activity. In carrying out such an investigation you need to keep in mind the following questions:

- What do I want to know? (and why?)
- How can I find out?
- What does the information tell me?
- What should I do about it?

There are many different ways of collecting information about schools and classrooms. Given limited time, however, the following are likely to be the most useful of the available methods:

1 *Observing classrooms*

Finding ways of gathering information about what goes on in classrooms is not easy. There is a tradition of privacy amongst teachers which means that visits from 'outsiders' are viewed with suspicion. Further, the presence of an observer tends to distort the natural environment of the classroom and makes it difficult for the observer to decide what to focus upon.

All of this assumes, of course, that somebody can be found who has the time to spend observing classroom life. Certainly there is much to be gained in terms of professional development in finding ways of enabling colleagues to observe one another at work. Regrettably teachers have little opportunity to observe practice and yet there is considerable evidence to suggest that this can be a powerful means of helping individuals to reflect upon and develop their own teaching.

Another possibility is for teachers to collect information themselves about their own practice. This idea is consistent with the view that improvements in professional practice can best be achieved by encouraging 'reflection-in-action'. In other words, teachers should be attempting to analyse their own approaches with a view to finding ways of developing their own practice. Various forms of audio-visual recording may also be helpful in providing information that can help teachers to review aspects of their classroom behaviour.

2 *Interviews*

In simple terms an interview is merely a conversation aimed at gathering information. It can take many forms and it is this variety that is one of its greatest strengths. Different forms of interviews can be used depending upon the nature of the information that is being sought and taking account of contextual factors and constraints.

Interviews may be short or long; they can be highly structured based upon a predetermined set of questions or loosely focused; they may involve individuals or groups of people. The great advantage is that unexpected comments can be pursued and responses that are unclear can be clarified by further discussion.

In planning interviews the following issues need to be considered:

- who should be interviewed
- the format of the questions to be asked
- the creation of an appropriate context
- how responses are to be recorded

Preparation is vital if the interview is to generate useful information.

3 *Holding meetings*

Given that an inquiry is likely to involve the need to gather information and views from a number of people, meetings have become an obvious way of working. Schools tend to have lots of meetings and, indeed, it is not uncommon to hear teachers complain about the amount of time these meetings take up. Consequently if meetings are to be a central strategy in the review it is important that they are conducted in ways that are purposeful and stimulating for participants, and cost effective.

If meetings are to be regarded as purposeful they should be arranged and conducted in a business-like manner. Experience has shown that the following steps can help:

1. Participants should be provided with information about what is to be discussed beforehand in order that they can prepare their own ideas.
2. Meetings should be seen to arrive at conclusions. Teachers tend to enjoy talking about their work and if discussions are not focused on some clear purpose they can become aimless.
3. At the end of a meeting it is helpful if conclusions and/or decisions are summarized.
4. Where appropriate after a meeting, conclusions and/or decisions should be written up and each participant issued with a copy.

Meetings in schools can have negative effects on teacher attitudes and morale if participants feel uncomfortable or unenthusiastic about the ways in which they are conducted. For example, individuals may be embarrassed if they feel that they are likely to appear foolish in front of colleagues. Others may lose interest when meetings are seen to be meandering or are dominated by one or two contributors. The aim should be to make meetings as enjoyable and effective as possible.

4 *Using questionnaires*

On the surface the use of questionnaires seems to provide a relatively simple and straightforward means of gathering information quickly from large groups of people. Experience suggests, however, that it is an approach that can be loaded with difficulties. Too often the questionnaires that are used have been poorly designed and, as a consequence, fail to provide the quality of information that is required. It is worthwhile to invest time in finding out a little more about questionnaire design.

Questionnaires may include closed or open-ended questions. However it has been said that open-ended questions often produce such unforeseen responses that the information collected may prove difficult or even impossible to analyse. Generally the most effective questionnaires consist of questions for which the form of response that is required is clearly defined.

The main issues that need to be considered in questionnaire construction are: question content, question wording, forms of response and the sequencing of items. On all these matters it makes sense to carry out some form of piloting before using the questionnaires fully.

5 *Analysing documents*

Documents may provide a further source of useful information. These may include national or local authority policy documents, school documents or examples of children's written work. The following is an agenda for analysing documents:

1. What kind of document is it?
2. What does it actually say?
3. Who provided it?
4. How did it come into existence?
5. Is it typical or exceptional of its type?
6. Is it complete? Has it been altered or edited?

There is a wealth of data in most schools which has not been formally 'documented', but which can contribute significantly to a process of inquiry. For example, patterns of subject choice by pupils, attendance records, or examination results, especially viewed over time, can reveal interesting trends.

6 *Using 'outsiders'*

A further strategy for gathering information may be to use someone external to the school. Inspectors, advisory teachers, or representatives from higher education could be particularly helpful in this respect. Inevitably they would draw upon one or other of the approaches described above to collect their information. Perhaps their most valuable asset, however, is that they have the ability to look at the school, or some aspect of its practice, from a different perspective. They may also bring to their work experiences of practice in other schools that can help staff to see things in a different way.

If it is the intention to use an outsider it is important that they are well briefed as to the background and purpose of the inquiry. Care must be taken to address diplomatic and ethical issues that arise as a result of somebody visiting the school in a manner that seems to be judgmental. However, the potential benefits of an outside view are such that it may be worth exploring possibilities.

SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Module 2

Special needs: definitions and responses

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Guide

As you read this study material for Module 2 we want you to review your thinking and practice as a teacher. To help you to do this the material provides an account of changes in thinking that are influencing developments in many parts of the world. These changes are concerned with the ways in which teachers respond to pupils experiencing difficulty. They necessitate moving the focus of attention away from providing help for individual pupils who are seen as being special towards changes in the curriculum to make it more appropriate for all pupils. As a result teachers should concentrate their efforts on improving the ways in which they respond to all members of their classes as individuals. In this way pupils experiencing difficulties can provide indications as to how such changes should be made.

Introduction

The overall aim of these materials is to help you review your thinking and practice as a teacher with respect to the ways in which you respond to pupils experiencing difficulties in your classroom. As you read this study material we want you to consider your own experience and compare it with the ideas we discuss. This should help you to focus on aspects of your work that may be worthy of further development.

At one time a workshop such as this would have been seen as a specialist event intended solely for teachers who had a particular interest in remedial and special education. As we present our arguments it will become obvious that our audience is all teachers and, indeed, our concern is with the learning of all children. This change of approach, from a concern with a small percentage of children thought to have learning difficulties towards a focus on all children, is central to the ideas presented in 'Special Needs in the Classroom'. The aim is to help all children experience success in the classroom, including those who have particular disabilities or difficulties to overcome.

In this study material we describe some current trends in thinking and explain why these are so important for all teachers. In particular, we explain how the ways in which the education service responds to pupils experiencing difficulties are developing so radically in many countries. We want you to consider these arguments and review your own point of view about the issues we raise.

Our consideration of these changes will be presented in terms of two different ways of defining the difficulties experienced by pupils in classrooms. These are:

1 *The individual pupil view*

Here educational difficulties are defined in terms of the characteristics of individual pupils, e.g. disabilities, social background or psychological attributes.

2 *The curriculum view*

Here educational difficulties are defined in terms of the tasks and activities provided for pupils, and the conditions created in the classroom. Currently approaches used in many countries are based upon the individual pupil view. However it is now becoming recognized that this way of defining educational difficulties has a number of significant disadvantages. As a result there is increasing interest in the curriculum view. Let us consider these two ways of defining educational difficulties in more detail.

The individual pupil view

Approaches to children experiencing difficulties in schools in many countries are influenced by this view point. They are based upon the following four assumptions:

Assumption 1

A group of children can be identified who are special

Difficulties experienced by certain pupils are explained in terms of certain of their characteristics that appear to inhibit their progress (e.g. disabilities, home background, intellectual ability). As a result the school population is divided into two groups, one of which consists of pupils who are seen as being special. In many countries, legally and administratively, this is the means used to identify those pupils who require special education. This provision is generally made in a special school or unit. With the development of remedial education in some countries, another group was created separating those pupils in primary and secondary schools who are thought to need remedial teaching. Such pupils are then withdrawn for extra teaching or placed in a separate remedial class.

Assumption 2

These children need special teaching in response to their problem

Special education tends to be all or nothing; that is, children are either identified as being special, and placed in a special group, or they are not, in which case they remain in the ordinary class with no special consideration. The identification process therefore becomes crucial, and a whole industry has grown up, which frequently excludes the class teacher, to facilitate this process of identification and allocation. Often it is also the case that pupils can only be regarded as special if additional resources are available.

Assumption 3

It is best to teach children with similar problems together

In an attempt to provide positive help towards pupils who are identified as being special they are sometimes placed together in special schools, units, classes or groups. This decision is made on the basis of what is seen as the common cause of their problems. Thus in special schools all the children said to be educationally retarded are placed together, all those with physical disabilities, and so on. Similarly, remedial classes or groups contain children thought to have similar learning problems. By putting them together the aim is to provide the best possible treatment by specialist teachers who had particular interests and skills in dealing with their difficulties. It should be added that in some countries children with certain types of disability are excluded from schools since they are regarded as being ineducable.

Assumption 4

Other children are 'normal' and benefit from existing forms of schooling

Having geared special resources to make arrangements for groups of special children, the system may take it for granted that other pupils in school will learn successfully as a result of their participation in the curriculum provided. There is therefore no encouragement for teachers in ordinary classes to give consideration to pupils experiencing difficulty.

Indeed, sometimes teachers may be discouraged from doing so because teaching children with special needs is seen as a job for the experts found in special schools, units or classes. The ordinary class teacher who attempts to make provision for 'special' pupils might be accused of doing them a disservice by denying them access to this expertise and additional resources.

On the basis of these four assumptions, provision for children experiencing difficulties in school in many parts of the world came to be characterized by an emphasis on categories, care and segregation. Let us consider some of the implications of these three concepts.

In many countries children have to be allocated to a formal category of handicap (e.g. mentally handicapped, learning disabled) in order to receive some form of special education.

It is hardly surprising that education services rely so much on this approach of describing a sub-group of children by the use of a category title. People need some form of words in order to refer to one another in conversation. Also, it seems to help our thinking if we can make general statements about people that appear to explain their situation in a meaningful way.

There is, in addition, a historical perspective that helps to explain the use of categories in describing children who are causing concern in school. An examination of the way in which special provision developed in different parts of the world indicates what we mean. The tactic of establishing a label that the general public can understand is an effective means of winning support for extra resources for needy groups.

Increasingly, however, the negative effects of using categories and labels to describe children have come to be recognized. An English writer, Paul Widlake, goes so far as to argue: 'The processes by which we label pupils may turn out to be more influential in causing learning difficulties than any other activity teachers engage in'.

What, then, is the nature of the negative effects that this process of labelling children can have? How might it be influential in causing learning difficulties?

First of all, the use of labels that emphasize possible causes of a child's difficulties in learning tends to distract attention from factors that might be important in helping pupils to succeed. Furthermore, the causes described are often vague, highly speculative and based on simplistic explanations of how educational difficulties occur. A major influence on the thinking of teachers in this respect has been the concept of 'general ability'. In particular, the emphasis that has been placed on intelligence testing has tended to encourage teachers to believe that many children's poor achievements can be explained by their 'low potential'. The problem then becomes the child's, and the teacher may feel that there is little point in trying to overcome the child's educational difficulties.

A second problem with the use of labels is that children simply do not fit neatly into the categories we have used in the past. This situation has become more and more evident as improvements in medical science have meant that minor impairments of young children are more readily identified, and that more children with multiple disabilities survive. So, for example, what category might we use to describe a youngster who has poor sight, a minor hearing loss, can't read and has poor social relationships with other members of the class?

Because children do not fit neatly into categories, it becomes a problem deciding which label to attach to them. When providing a label is a crucial part of the process leading to decisions about resources then tensions can arise between different professional groups. For example, situations arise where a teacher may feel that a child is just not coping with the work in the class, and, after consultation with the parents, outside experts are called in to provide advice.

The advice offered may be conflicting and centred on whether or not the child fits a particular category. It is difficult to see how such debates benefit the child. Often such discussions are inclined to consume the energies of the different people concerned without necessarily having a productive outcome in terms of deciding how best the child could be helped there and then. It may also leave the teacher and parents confused about what they should do for the child. Even if a label could be easily agreed, this is frequently used to argue for a specialist placement, and the child is then placed on the waiting list of the appropriate school or unit. It can sometimes then be years before such a place became available. What does the class teacher do in the meantime? Because the label confirms that there is a problem with the child that requires the intervention of experts, the class teacher is discouraged from considering what responses might be made within the ordinary class.

The third and arguably most worrying feature of the process of labelling is to do with its effects on people's attitudes. Referring to children by a word or a phrase that is supposed to sum up what they are like, what they can do (or not do), and what should happen to them in the future, is nothing more than stereotyping. Telling you that a child is disabled in some way, disturbed, or of low ability simply encourages you to focus on one feature of that individual in a generalized way that may distract attention from their many other unique features. What tends to happen as a result of this form of stereotyping is a lowering of expectations of what the person can achieve. A common example of this happening in some schools is the use of the term 'remedial'. To be referred to as a remedial child usually means that somebody in school, often on the basis of the child's performance in reading and writing, has decided that he or she is dull. What follows is a continuing and persisting expectation that the child will not be able to achieve very much in school.

In some countries legislation has meant that formal special education categories have been abolished. The arguments presented above also make a strong case for teachers being much more sensitive about the use of labels.

The use of labelling leads many teachers to overprotect certain of their children. Certainly a caring approach should characterize all teaching, but we need to be aware of the dangers of underestimating what children can achieve.

Too often a desire to care and protect leads to some youngsters taking part in a significantly reduced educational programme characterized by lack of challenge and stimulation. For example, some teachers feel that they are helping some of their children by giving them colouring and drawing to do instead of the work being done by the rest of the class. These teachers feel that to do otherwise places the children under pressure, causing them distress and anxiety.

Generally, however, the practice in many schools is to provide children identified as having special problems with additional help in the areas in which they are experiencing difficulties. So, for example, children seen as having problems in learning to read are given some form of extra work related to reading. This might involve specially assigned tasks within the classroom or, more usually, periods of withdrawal from the room to work intensively on special programmes or materials. Sometimes these activities involve the use of carefully structured materials, matched to the attainment level of the child, with the intention of providing a high degree of success. This can be an effective way of providing extra help. Too often, however, this approach leads to them working in isolation on tasks that do not have obvious relevance to other work, or that the child might find boring or repetitive.

Children may experience other disadvantages as a result of their involvement in working on tasks intended to help them overcome their learning difficulties. They might, for example, be excluded from stimulating activities carried out by other class members. Because of this they may not understand important topics or themes being developed over a period of time, leaving them feeling confused or distressed by their own lack of understanding. It may also mean that they miss out on those activities that provide the stimulation necessary for the development of skills such as reading and writing. The process of being asked to work on separate assignments might, in addition, have a damaging effect upon their morale as learners and their status with their peers.

It is fair to add that many teachers are very conscious of the dangers of overprotection and seek ways of working with all their children that are both caring and challenging. Certainly it is important to recognize that a sense of optimism is essential to successful teaching, particularly with those pupils who have experienced a significant sense of failure in their school career.

Associated with the notions of categories and care that tends to characterize traditional thinking is the tactic of separating groups of pupils away from the mainstream in order to provide them with some form of extra help. For a few this means placement in a special school; for others it could be a special class or unit; and for many it means some withdrawal for short periods of individual or small group teaching. This issue of segregation in education is an emotive one that tends to lead people into adopting extreme positions.

Avoiding extreme views, however, it does seem fair to say that generally in education there is a tendency to opt too readily for forms of separate provision. One of the effects of this is to undermine the confidence of some teachers that they can deal with youngsters who present difficulties. The message has been: special education is for experts.

Special schools, in particular, have come in for considerable criticism recently. Arguments presented against them include:

- parents are frequently unhappy about their child being admitted;
- there is a stigma associated with special schools;
- there is no convincing evidence that pupils make better progress as a result of being placed in a special school;
- because of the size and organization of special schools, the curriculum tends to be more restricted and consequently opportunities for wider educational developments are limited;
- the special school child is denied the opportunity to interact with 'normal' children (and, of course, 'normal' children are denied the opportunity of interacting with 'special' children);
- since children often travel out of their home district to attend a special school, they lose social contact with their neighbourhood peer group;
- transfer to a special school seems frequently to be for the remainder of the child's school career; although transfer back is theoretically possible, in practice it rarely occurs.

In fairness, many would argue that, where they do exist, special schools have much to offer, and that despite these criticisms the quality of education they provide can be very beneficial for some children. In some cases the size of special schools, their level of resourcing and the commitment of staff have given special schools considerable opportunity to develop a child-centred education. This can mean individual contributions are greatly valued, and the self-esteem and self-confidence of pupils significantly enhanced.

Special schools in some countries have also produced some impressive work in terms of curriculum development. This is generally a result of groups of staff working closely together to provide a curriculum that is carefully planned, and takes account of the individual needs of pupils. However, none of these developments is exclusive to special schools and many would feel that special schools have tended to drift too far apart from the mainstream of education, to the detriment of staff and children in both sectors. It is therefore not surprising that there are schemes in many areas to develop greater links between mainstream and special schools.

The issue of segregation is not just about special schools. Separate arrangements within ordinary schools can also be disadvantageous to pupils.

For example, a unit was established in one school for children presenting behaviour problems. Taught by an enthusiastic and creative young teacher, who works hard to provide an interesting range of opportunities for her class, the children have little contact with the rest of the school. Pupils might stay in the unit for three or four years, they rarely go into other classrooms, other teachers rarely visit their classroom, and, to make things even worse, their lunches are sent in for them to eat together as a group.

Often forms of segregation are more difficult to detect although still likely to foster negative outcomes. For example, a teacher described the groupings in her classroom as follows: around one table were the children who work 'fast'; around others were children 'in the middle'; at another table were the children who were 'trying'! As part of this explanation she said that she felt sure that members of the class were unaware of the significance of these arrangements. It would be comforting to think this was so.

The main point that we wish to make is that, if we do choose to separate pupils in order to provide extra attention, we must be aware of possible negative effects upon their self-esteem and, indeed, upon the attitudes of those around them.

To sum up, the dominant approach to pupils experiencing difficulties in schools is to seek to identify particular sub-groups thought to have similar problems that have common causes. This individual pupil view leads to forms of provision that can be characterized as emphasizing categories, care and segregation.

Points to consider

- Is the 'individual pupil view' of educational difficulty still dominant in your area?
- Do you agree with the criticisms made of this way of thinking?

The curriculum view

Teachers in many countries recognize the limitations and possible dangers of the individual pupil view of educational difficulties. Consequently they are exploring a more flexible and optimistic approach. We call this approach a curriculum view. In other words we are seeking to understand children's difficulties as they participate in the experience of schooling.

Taking a curriculum view can help us to cater for a wider range of pupils, including some who are currently excluded from ordinary schools. This view is based upon the following four assumptions:

Assumption 1

Any child may experience difficulties in school

It has to be recognized that experiencing difficulty in learning is a normal part of schooling rather than an indication that there is something wrong with a child. It is only when difficulties in learning cause anxiety to the child, the child's parents or teachers that particular attention needs to be paid. Furthermore, this can apply to any youngster whatever his or her overall attainments in comparison with others in the same class. So, for example, a child who is generally successful in learning may go through a period of boredom with the work presented by the class teacher. If this means that he or she is not applying effort to the task then it becomes a cause for concern. On the other hand, a child whose progress is generally slower than that of classmates may be getting on well and feeling generally positive about his or her work. The point is clear, therefore: our concern is with all children.

Assumption 2

Such difficulties can point to ways in which teaching can be improved

In moving towards this new way of working it is important to recognize its theoretical basis. You will recall that in the individual pupil view the concern was with finding out what was wrong with the child. This approach, often characterized as a medical model, assumes that pinpointing the cause of a child's problem (i.e. diagnosis) helps us to determine an appropriate response (i.e. treatment or prescription). The new thinking, on the other hand, recognizes that, whilst the individual differences of children must influence their progress, what we as teachers do is also very important. Difficulties in learning occur as a result of the decisions teachers make, the tasks teachers present, the resources teachers provide and the ways in which teachers choose to organize the classroom. Consequently difficulties in learning can be created by teachers but, by the same token, can be avoided. This viewpoint is essentially an optimistic one since it points to areas of decision-making, over which we as teachers have reasonable control, that can help children to experience success in the classroom and overcome whatever disadvantages or impairments they bring with them into school.

Assumption 3

These improvements lead to better learning conditions for all pupils

The curriculum view of educational difficulties encourages teachers to become much more skilled in interpreting events and circumstances in their classrooms. Its main concern is with the improvement of overall learning conditions as a result of a consideration of difficulties experienced by pupils in their classes. In this way pupils experiencing difficulties can be seen more positively as a source of feedback on existing classroom arrangements, providing insights as to how these can be improved.

Furthermore since these arrangements are experienced by all members of the class it seems reasonable to assume that they will all have the advantages of the changes that are made. In this way the adoption of the curriculum view point can be seen as a means of improving schooling for all.

Assumption 4

Support should be available as teachers attempt to develop their practice.

The message of the past was that educational difficulties were dealt with by experts. When children were seen as being in some way exceptional or special, teachers were encouraged to look for outside experts who could solve the problem. Consequently teachers tended to assume that there were certain members of the class that they could not be expected to teach. Furthermore, the work of some of the special education experts often encouraged this viewpoint by giving the impression that they had methods of working that were exclusive to them. This attitude had the effect of further undermining the confidence of teachers and implying that they need not take responsibility for certain pupils. The curriculum view encourages each of us to retain responsibility for all members of the class. However, taking responsibility for all pupils does not mean that teachers should feel that they cannot look for help and advice. All of us are limited by our own previous experience and existing skills; all of us must expect to meet situations and challenges that we find difficult; and, indeed, all of us must be prepared to recognize our professional limitations.

There is nothing to be gained by pretending to cope with something that is beyond our competence. So, in wishing to discourage the idea of special education experts who appear to take away certain of our responsibilities, we wish to argue that what is needed instead are approaches to teaching and learning that emphasize the sharing of expertise, energy and resources. Furthermore, as emphasized throughout 'Special Needs in the Classroom', sharing and collaboration are noticeable features of all successful schools.

In the light of these four assumptions associated with the curriculum view of educational difficulties we can now begin to consider ways in which schools should respond. In doing so we will move away from the concern with categories, care and segregation towards ways of working that emphasize inquiry, collaboration and improvement. Using these approaches we will be seeking ways of teaching that take account of the individuality of all of our pupils. Furthermore we will be seeking to understand the difficulties experienced by certain children in order to bring about improvements in our teaching.

Points to consider

- Do you agree that any pupil may experience difficulties in the classroom?
- How far does your own way of thinking about educational difficulties fit in with what has been suggested so far?

A way forward

Whilst inevitably teaching is partly about organizing large numbers of learners (particularly given the class sizes in many schools), the task of the teacher must be to find ways of managing the learning environment to take reasonable account of individual class members. First and foremost this requires a certain outlook. There is a need for a commitment to recognize the individuality of each child and see this as a positive quality that can be used to enrich the classroom encounters that are planned. It is also necessary to find ways of making sure that the tasks presented to children have meaning for them at a personal level. All of this means that teachers need to know their children as well as possible in terms of:

- *Previous experience*

  i.e. What sorts of experiences have the children had inside and out of school?

- *Skills and knowledge*

  i.e. What do the children understand? What can reasonably be expected given the children's current level of skills and knowledge?

- *Interests*

  i.e. What are the children's interests and preferences?

- *Attitudes*

  i.e. Do the children have any feelings that may influence learning?

As part of knowing children, the teacher also has to be sensitive to any physical, sensory or other health factors that may need to be taken into account in planning the curriculum. Indeed, as teachers we need to be aware of the fact that sometimes we may be in the best position to detect such areas of difficulty, particularly if they are of a temporary or intermittent nature.

For example, teachers often pick up mild hearing difficulties in children that have been overlooked in the close social context of the home.

In considering how schools can become more responsive to pupils as individuals it is important to take account of the individuality of teachers. Clearly we vary in much the same ways as do our pupils. Once again, this variety needs to be recognized, respected and utilized to enrich the work of a school. Consequently throughout these materials there is a strong emphasis on teachers as learners, working to become more effective practitioners. In encouraging this view we will be arguing that there are three main sources of improvement to teacher performance. These are:

1 *Previous experience*

Each of us needs to recognize that our own professional experience provides a rich source of information that can help us to become more effective teachers. Too often in the past the improvement of teaching has been seen as something that occurs as a result of outside experts explaining to teachers what they should do. Apart from the fact that this is based on a rather naive view of how people learn, it also has the effect of undermining the confidence of teachers to see their own practice as a source of ideas that can be used to facilitate development. In these materials, therefore, we encourage you to reflect upon your own ways of working, recognizing your own areas of strength and seeking ways of improving those aspects that you wish to develop.

2 *Colleagues*

As explained throughout these materials, successful schools are characterized by a strong emphasis on collaboration and sharing. A major strength in these schools is that the process of professional improvement is carried out in an atmosphere of support and security. It also means that individuals have an audience to talk to about their practice, and trusted colleagues who can provide comment and suggestions.

Where possible this process can be further encouraged by enabling teachers to teach in teams for periods of time in order to enable them to support one another as they attempt to introduce new strategies or materials into their classrooms. This approach, sometimes referred to as 'peer coaching', is along the lines of techniques for improvements that are used in craft workshops and in the training of athletes.

3 *Research evidence*

Whilst emphasizing the idea of teachers as learners, working wherever possible with colleagues to develop their practice, we would not wish to rule out the benefits that can be gained from investigations carried out about teaching in other contexts. Evidence from formal research projects reported in the literature, and the knowledge and experience of others in the education service, can and should be used to enrich and stimulate the process of professional development. What is important, however, is that research evidence is seen as a supplement to self-improvement and not a replacement for it.

In seeking ways of responding to pupils' as individuals and bearing in mind the individuality of teachers, we must not lose sight of the wider context in which schools operate. It would be naive for us as teachers to ignore the interests, concerns and, indeed, demands of society at large. Certainly where a school operates in ways that are not fully understood or, even worse, mistrusted by members of its community, this creates a possible source of tension that may be to the disadvantage of the children involved. In particular, where parents are uneasy about what is happening to their children this can be damaging to teacher morale and the children's progress. Another theme that pervades these materials, therefore, is to do with finding ways of building a closer partnership between school and community with a view to creating a shared understanding of the purpose of schooling.

Finally, as we seek ways of improving our teaching, we have to be realistic about the constraints within which we operate as teachers. Resources, in terms of materials and people, are limiting factors. There is only so much that can be done given the time, energy and materials that are available. Having said that, it is not an argument for despondency. Despite relatively large class sizes, limited resources and too much pressure, many teachers remain positive, optimistic and enthusiastic. This remains a fundamental strength and, indeed, provides another theme that we wish to emphasize. We believe that the care of teachers—their emotional support and professional encouragement—is essential to quality in education.

Summing up, the approach taken in the Special Needs in the Classroom materials is based on the belief that a curriculum view of educational difficulties can lead to overall improvements in schooling. Special needs are special, therefore, in that they provide insights into possibilities for improvement that might otherwise pass unnoticed.

Points to consider

- How do you feel about this 'new approach'?
- Do you feel that it is relevant to your work as a teacher?

Module 2 Summary

Two ways of looking at educational difficulties:

1 The Individual Pupil View

(i.e. difficulties defined in terms of pupil characteristics)

Based upon the following ideas:

- A group of children can be identified who are special
- These children need special teaching in response to their problems
- It is best to teach children with similar problems together
- Other children are normal and benefit from existing teaching

2 The Curriculum View

(i.e. difficulties defined in terms of tasks, activities and classroom conditions)

Based upon the following ideas:

- Any child may experience difficulties in school
- Such difficulties can point to ways in which teaching can be improved
- These improvements lead to better learning conditions for all pupils
- Support should be available as teachers attempt to develop their practice

This course aims to help you to become a better teacher.
It is about finding ways of helping all children to learn.

The units that follow will help you to consider in more detail issues raised in the study material. Your course leader will explain how these units are to be dealt with.

Contents of the Units

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Unit 2.1

Defining special needs

Unit aim

To help participants to appreciate the range of factors that may influence children's learning.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material, 'The Story of Peter'

2 Discuss the story with a partner. Consider your reactions to what happened.

3 In larger groups (fours or sixes), discuss the following issues:

- What is the nature of Peter's difficulties?
- What do you feel about the contributions of the various professional people involved?
- What factors influenced Peter's lack of progress?
- As a whole group make a composite list of factors influencing Peter's progress. See if these factors can be grouped and categorized.

4 Present your findings to the other groups.

Evaluation issues

1 What have you learned from this activity?

2 What implications are there for your own work as a teacher?

3 What is your view about the curriculum view of educational difficulties?

The story of Peter

This is the story of Peter Blakey's first year in the junior department of a primary school. Most teachers will probably know a child like Peter—some may know many.

Peter moved into Mrs Jones' class in September when he was 8 years old. Fairly quickly she realized that Peter was some way behind the others and raised the subject in conversation with Miss Nolan, Peter's previous classteacher. Miss Nolan confirmed that this had always been the case, but said that Peter seemed happy enough and had made some progress during his year with her, albeit rather slow. Mrs Jones decided to keep a careful eye on the situation.

As time went on the problem seemed to grow steadily worse. It was true that Peter was making some progress, but it was painfully slow and the gap between him and the rest of the class seemed to be growing day by day. Perhaps even more worrying was that Peter's behaviour seemed to be deteriorating. He had been very rude once or twice when told to get on with his work, and was frequently finding excuses not to work. Books and pens had been lost, requests to go to the toilet had become more frequent, and Peter was always the first to volunteer for any job that would take him out of the classroom.

Mrs Jones decided to ask the headteacher's advice. She described the problems she was having with Peter to Mr Walker, the headteacher, who decided first to talk to Miss Nolan. Later he asked Mrs Jones to prepare a full written report so that consideration could be given to Peter's needs. Mrs Jones presented the following report to the headteacher in January.

Report on Peter Blakey

Peter is a pleasant and likeable little lad, despite the fact that it is almost impossible to keep him working for more than a few minutes at a time. He needs constant one-to-one supervision. Otherwise his mind seems to wander and eventually he begins interrupting the other children. I feel as though I have tried absolutely everything—I have shouted at him and tried kindness, but it doesn't seem to make much difference to his attitude.

As far as work is concerned Peter can only read six or seven words on the Word Recognition Test. He can recognize his own name and is currently reading one of the Level 2 books, although he doesn't always seem to understand what the book is about. In arithmetic it is much the same story!

He is a long way behind the rest of the class, he can count reasonably well and do simple sums (on a good day and provided he can use counters), but again he doesn't seem to really understand the process involved. In group and language lessons Peter rarely contributes.

I have thought a lot about Peter in an attempt to get to the bottom of his problem by *finding out what is really the matter with him. I have wondered whether he has difficulty hearing because his speech is still very immature and he invariably fails to carry out any instructions that I give him. I just cannot decide whether he has difficulty hearing properly, doesn't understand what is said to him, or is simply lazy.*

I have not met Peter's mother as she did not turn up to the parents' meeting last term. Miss Nolan told me that Peter has no father—apparently he died before Peter was three. I have wondered whether this may have affected his work in some way.

Peter's favourite activities in school are painting and PE, and he says that he likes watching TV at home. He loves to paint or crayon and he will sit doing this all day if I let him.

I hope that some special help can be provided for Peter as soon as possible, I feel very sorry for him, but I am afraid that I just don't understand his difficulties and don't know how best to help him. I think that it is an urgent problem because his behaviour in class is getting worse.

Mrs T. Jones
Classteacher, 17th January 1992

The headteacher, who had met Mrs Blakey only once, decided to invite her to school to discuss Peter's problems. He wanted to find out more about the family background and thought he might be able to persuade Mrs Blakey to do some work with Peter at home. In any event, he needed her permission to refer Peter to the Special Needs Advisory Service and the school medical officer.

Eventually, a meeting was arranged between Mr Walker, Mrs Jones and Mrs Blakey. Apparently Mr Blakey had died in a road accident just before Peter's third birthday and whilst Mrs Blakey was pregnant. Susan, Peter's sister, was now nearly five and attended a local nursery school full-time. It appeared that Mrs Blakey had not attended parents' evening because she had been let down by the baby-sitter, at the last minute. Both Mr Walker and Mrs Jones were impressed by Mrs Blakey's genuine concern for Peter and her eagerness to help as much as possible at home. Mrs Blakey was not surprised to learn that Peter was some way behind the other children in his class because, in her words, he had 'always been slow to catch on'. She explained that he was one-and-a-half before he could walk properly, and well over two before he could say more than two or three words clearly. Mr Walker was particularly interested to hear that Peter's birth had been a difficult one. Mrs Blakey said that forceps had been used and 'his head was a funny shape'. He wondered if mild brain damage had been sustained, or if Peter was suffering from dyslexia. He said nothing about this to Mrs Blakey, however, but decided to mention these details to whoever subsequently came to see Peter. Mrs Blakey agreed to Mr Walker's suggestion that advice should be sought from the Special Needs Advisory Service. She was less happy about referring him to the school medical officer, since she was sure that Peter's hearing was normal and felt that the exercise was rather pointless. Nevertheless, consent for the referral was given.

Afterwards, Mrs Jones and Mr Walker discussed the interview, which they both felt had been helpful. A number of points had been raised which might at least partly explain Peter's problems. It was possible that Mr Blakey's death had had some kind of long-lasting effect upon Peter, and Mrs Blakey had said that 'Peter often asks about him'. Mr Walker felt sure that the difficult birth was an important factor and thought that mild brain damage had probably been sustained. And finally, while Mrs Blakey seemed a caring and well-intentioned mother, she clearly was not very bright herself, and maybe this was a factor. Whatever the cause of the problem, Mr Walker agreed with Mrs Jones that expert help should be sought immediately, and so he wrote to the Special Needs Advisory Service and asked the school medical officer to check Peter's hearing.

Whilst Mr Walker received prompt acknowledgements to his requests, it was some time before he heard anything further. He knew that the school medical officer and the Special Needs Advisory Service had quite long waiting lists and therefore did not expect Peter to be seen by either much before Easter.

Eventually Mrs Blakey was asked to take Peter to the school clinic for a hearing test. This she did, and the results of a thorough audiometric investigation indicated, as Mrs Blakey had anticipated, that Peter's hearing was normal. A letter confirming these findings was sent to the school.

In the meantime a speech therapist had visited the school to see another child and Mr Walker took the opportunity of mentioning Peter. The speech therapist kindly agreed to see him that morning and, after talking to him for some time, reported back to the headteacher that, although Peter's speech was rather immature for an eight-year-old, there was certainly no sign of any abnormal articulation. The problem would solve itself with time, she said, and she could not justify giving him regular individual, speech therapy.

Just before the April holidays, Mr Thompson, a teacher from the Special Needs Advisory Service, visited the school to see Peter. He took him to the medical room and administered a number of tests. Throughout the session Peter worked well for Mr Thompson and showed no signs of distractability. This did not surprise Mrs Jones because she knew Peter was capable of concentrating for quite long periods if he was really interested and she was prepared to give him her individual attention. This was one of the main problems—she had thirty-eight children in her class and she could not ignore them to deal with Peter.

Before leaving, Mr Thompson discussed his findings with Mr Walker and Mrs Jones. A number of interesting points emerged. Mr Thompson had administered a range of tests including the Picture Vocabulary Test. This test, he explained, measures 'receptive vocabulary', and Peter had a standard score of 73. This meant very little to either Mr Walker to Mrs Jones, but it seemed to worry Mr Thompson greatly. This test result, coupled with Peter's low attainments across the curriculum and his deteriorating behaviour, led him to feel that the case should be referred to an educational psychologist.

Mr Thompson listened with interest to Mr Walker's information about Peter's home circumstances and the difficult birth. He agreed that these factors might well be the cause of Peter's learning difficulties, but again felt that an educational psychologist would be better qualified to judge.

A number of useful suggestions were made by Mr Thompson. He had used a Reading Skills Test with Peter. This test attempts to identify which of a wide range of skills have been acquired, and which have not. In actual fact, Peter could not manage much of the test and most of the information it yielded was already known to Mrs Jones. Nevertheless, a booklet is supplied with the test which contains a variety of teaching suggestions as well as instructions for administration, and Mr Walker felt that the test would be useful with other children who had reading difficulties. In addition, Mr Thompson described a Programmed Reading Kit containing a wide range of materials which would be appropriate for Peter, and said that he would loan one to the school so that they could evaluate its usefulness.

By now Mrs Jones had mixed feelings about all that had happened. On the one hand the school medical officer, the speech therapist and the special needs teacher had presumably acted as promptly as their work load permitted, and each had done their job properly. The medical officer and the speech therapist had answered the questions they had been asked about Peter's hearing and speech, and Mr Thompson had made a number of useful and practical suggestions. On the other hand, Mrs Jones was aware that Peter's problems still existed, the gap between him and the rest of the class was still growing, and his behaviour, if anything, had further deteriorated. Peter's name was now to be placed on yet another waiting list. In all probability, by the time he was seen by the psychologist the end of the Summer Term would be in sight and then Peter would be moving into someone else's class. She was frustrated, believing that more should be done for Peter but not knowing who to blame.

It was late June before the psychologist arrived at school. Mrs Blakey had consented to the referral which was made in writing by Mr Walker in April. Mrs Armitage, the educational psychologist, observed Peter for a while in his classroom and then took him to the medical room for an interview which lasted slightly more than an hour.

A meeting was held following afternoon school on the same day between Mrs Armitage, Mr Walker and Mrs Jones. The first important point to emerge was that Peter, in the opinion of Mrs Armitage, did not need to be sent to a special class. This was a considerable relief to Mr Walker. Neither he, nor Mrs Jones, wanted Peter to be off-loaded. They simply wanted to know what more could be done to help Peter in their own school. Apparently, Mrs Armitage had administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children which provides a Verbal Scale IQ and Performance Scale IQ. Peter's scores were 79 and 94 respectively which, according to Mrs Armitage, indicated that Peter performed rather better on tasks which did not rely heavily on understanding or using language. This did not surprise

Mrs Jones. Mrs Armitage went on to explain that segregating Peter, in her opinion, would not be in his best interests. She pointed out that 'sending Peter to a special school or class would deprive him of the opportunity to interact with normal children'. Peter was a good deal 'brighter' than the children in the local special school and, anyway, 'his reading age is now over six, and so he is obviously making some progress'.

Mrs Armitage asked about Peter's home circumstances, and Mr Walker provided the background information he had collected during his interview with Mrs Blakey six months earlier. The psychologist then explained that it was difficult to determine exactly why a child was having learning difficulties in the same way as a doctor, for example, might diagnose a physical ailment. The truth was, she explained, that all of these factors were probably involved in some way.

Mrs Jones then raised the question of dyslexia. Was Peter dyslexic? Mrs Armitage explained that she had reservations about the use of the term, again because it was difficult to know exactly what people meant by it, and in any event, she said, 'there are no special teaching methods which are particularly suitable for the treatment of dyslexia'.

Three practical suggestions were made by Mrs Armitage before she left. First she said that she would ask Mr Thompson if he could make weekly visits to the school during the forthcoming Autumn term to help with Peter. Secondly, she suggested that language work for Peter was as important as reading. In a subsequent written report to Mr Walker she listed three books containing useful suggestions and a language development programme which she felt would be appropriate. And, finally, regarding Peter's deteriorating classroom behaviour, Mrs Armitage emphasized that the classteacher should praise Peter's efforts generously, no matter how modest his achievements were, compared with his peers. Mr Walker ordered the books and the language programme immediately, in the hope that they would arrive before Peter began his second year in the junior department.

Mrs Jones ended the year as she had started it—worried about Peter. The special needs advisory teacher, the school medical officer, the speech therapist, and the psychologist had all seen him. They had all either answered the questions they had been asked, or made useful suggestions about what might be done with him in the classroom. Various books, a language programme and a test had been recommended and ordered, and a remedial teacher was to visit Peter once a week from the start of the following term. Although Peter had made some progress during his year with her and was still manageable in the classroom, albeit at times rather awkward and most of the time easily distracted, Mrs Jones was still apprehensive about his future.

Unit 2.2

What can schools do about special needs?

Unit aim

To help participants recognize school factors that influence children's progress.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material, 'Fonteyn'.

2 Discuss with a partner the following issues:

- What special needs occur in Fonteyn?
- What factors create these special needs?

3 In larger groups (fours or sixes) compare your answers to these questions. Then as a group consider the following issue: If the teachers in Fonteyn wished to review the policy and practice of their schools, what factors should they examine?

4 Make a report to the other groups outlining the factors you feel to be important in reviewing schools in Fonteyn.

5 Discuss the relevance of these same factors for reviewing policy in your own school.

Evaluation issues

1 Are the schools factors you have considered relevant to your own school?

2 Are there some aspects of your own school that could be changed in response to children experiencing difficulties?

Fonteyn

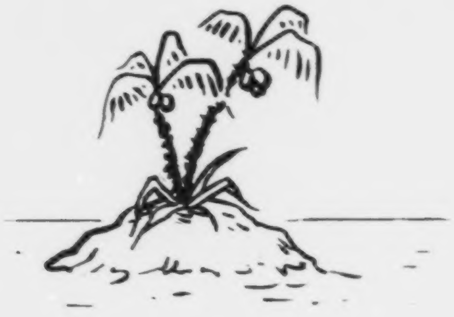
A team of researchers has recently investigated the educational provision of Fonteyn, a small island state. It is a reasonably sophisticated society which places great stress on grace and style of movement, much as we stress intellectual skill. So much so that many of its people abhor clumsiness as some in our society tend to abhor stupidity. Furthermore, clumsy people, often referred to as 'gawkies', are the subject of much humour amongst its locals.

The society has developed a system of writing which can only be mastered by those who are graceful, whilst its technology is such that a high degree of grace and skill are necessary to run its machines.

Within schools the success of pupils is largely determined by their movement abilities. The education service has developed an elaborate vocabulary and forms of assessment for distinguishing between degrees of grace. Small special schools have been established for those pupils with severe clumsiness, i.e. those with subnormal grace quotients (GQs). In addition special help of various forms is provided in ordinary schools for those youngsters who are thought to have mild to moderate clumsiness.

On admission to the island's one secondary school pupils are tested and assigned to classes on the basis of their general movement ability. The curriculum stresses all aspects of movement, including dancing and rhythmics. Considerable attention has been paid in recent years to the idea of 'gracefulness across the curriculum' so that much of the teaching approaches used have a strong emphasis on movement as a means of communication and recording.

The researchers found considerable debate amongst members of the community about the state of the island's school system. Many teachers reported difficulty in teaching pupils who they believe to have insufficient physical potential to take part in normal school activities. Some feel that special classes should be created where these less able pupils could be provided with additional help and a curriculum based on non-academic activities such as literature and humanities. Others, however, feel that this would be divisive.



Discussion material

Recently publicity in the island newspaper has drawn attention to the fact that many so-called gawky children are dropping out of the school system, choosing to spend their time in anti-social activities such as hanging around libraries. One report, however, noted that many such youngsters, despite being unsuccessful in school, go on to become happy and well-adjusted adults.

The big question facing teachers in Fonteyn is, what can the school do to help children with special needs?

Unit 2.3

Inclusive schools

Unit aim

To examine ways in which schools include children with disabilities.

Activities

1. View the television programme, 'Towards Inclusive Schools'.
2. In groups, brainstorm a list of ways in which schools in the programme are able to include pupils with disabilities.
3. Put the items on the list in order of importance.
4. Develop a composite list by taking items from lists developed by other working groups.

Evaluation issues

1. What are the most important messages that have emerged from your discussions?
2. Can these messages be incorporated into the work of your school?

Unit 2.4

Dealing with disabilities

Unit aim

To consider the educational implications of various disabilities.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material, 'Three Children'.

2 In small working groups, agree answers to the following questions:

- Do you agree with the stated needs for each of the three children?
- What arrangements could be made in your schools to meet these needs?

3 Report your findings to other groups.

Evaluation issues

1 Could these three children be educated in your school?

2 What modifications/improvements could be made in order to make your school more responsive to the needs of pupils with disabilities?

Three children

Sunil

Sunil is due to move up to secondary school from a unit for visually impaired children attached to a junior school. He has nystagmus, a condition which causes the eyes to flicker uncontrollably.

The unit staff feel that Sunil should be able to benefit from mainstream education owing to good preparation by his junior school teachers. He is learning to use a special typewriter for his written work and his reading is improving though still weak. The teacher for visually impaired children will be able to offer an hour a week during Sunil's first year in secondary school, to help him settle to the increased curricular demands which he will have to meet.

Sunil's teachers agree with the educational psychologist that his problems are influenced as much by his basic literacy difficulties as by those created by the nystagmus and progress has been good since he began to work on a special learning programme.

During a recent case conference between the headteacher of the junior school, the teacher for visually impaired children, the educational psychologist, the head of first year from the secondary school and the education officer, it was agreed that Sunil should attend the secondary school which will be looking to meet the following needs:

1. He should continue on the special learning programme which will require teaching time of about 30 minutes a day.
2. He will need to continue lessons on the special typewriter and practice his written work on it.
3. All staff teaching him must be made aware of his visual and specific learning difficulties and know to whom they can go for guidance on support for him in the classroom.

Paco

Paco lives at home with both parents and two younger sisters. Frequent rows between his parents escalate into violent attacks which usually involve the children. Paco will then go to his Uncle's house down the road often staying there all night. At school Paco exhibits both learning and behaviour difficulties.

He rarely attempts to read, stating that the work is 'babyish' and he seems to have little capacity to master the basic number rules. He seems unable to concentrate for long on any activity, becomes frustrated and impatient, swearing at teachers and other pupils and refusing to continue with his work.

He sometimes storms out of lessons and hides in the school grounds. At other times he disrupts the class by shouting out, picking arguments with others and fighting.

Special schooling was rejected both by Paco and his parents but the school felt that in view of his bizarre home situation, experience of models of normality which the ordinary school can offer were important for him. In a case conference during the Summer Term it was felt that Paco's most urgent needs were:

1. To have a 'named person' who will be responsible for providing consistency of support, guidance and management.
2. To receive some intensive teaching in a small group for part of every day on basic skills and subjects.
3. To have opportunity to experience working alongside his peers in order to gain social control in a normal setting.
4. For curricular materials, met in mainstream subjects, to be adapted or modified so that he is able to make sense of them and so achieve some success.

Jasmin

Jasmin's parents moved from another country a year before she was born. They have learnt the local language and have high ambitions for their children. They have therefore become increasingly concerned because Jasmin does not seem to have made the same kind of progress as her brother and sister or her classmates. In fact she has fallen further behind each year and although her reading is now progressing well she is still very weak at her spelling and written work.

In their anxiety they recently asked the headteacher to arrange for an assessment to be carried out by the educational psychologist. His report states that Jasmin is generally well above average in ability compared with other children of her age, but that she has learning difficulties with literacy skills. She will need to be offered a special learning programme to improve her spelling and writing, when she transfers to Secondary school in September.

The educational psychologist noted that Jasmin was interested in history and living things. At a Case Conference, held in the Summer Term before her entry to the secondary school, concern was expressed by Jasmin's junior class teacher that she was beginning to become rather isolated from her peers and seemed to be increasingly unwilling to respond positively in lessons. He put this down to embarrassment regarding her difficulties in learning.

Recommendations from this meeting were:

1 That Jasmin should be given an opportunity to have access to all subjects, especially history and science.

2 That all her teachers should be alerted to her difficulty with written work and that they should know who they can go to for help.

3 That other methods of recording her learning, besides writing, should be tried.

4 That she be offered a learning programme specifically designed to improve her writing and spelling.

During the preliminary assessments of the first year in September, eighteen other pupils have been identified as having similar difficulties with spelling and writing to Jasmin's which unless dealt with, will seriously hamper their progress in those subjects which make high literacy demands.

Unit 2.5

Attitudes to disability

Unit aim

To help participants to reconsider their own attitudes towards people with disabilities.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material, 'The Special Needs Bank'

2 In groups of four discuss your points of view with respect to Mr Jones' proposal.

3 Groups adopt either a positive or negative stance to the proposal. They then prepare a set of arguments to support this position.

4 Pairs of participants with different views meet together and present their arguments to one another. They attempt to maintain their stance in the light of the other views presented.

5 Groups reconsider their points of view as a result of the stance-taking exercise.

Evaluation issues

1 What have you learned from this activity?

2 Have your ideas and attitudes changed in any way?

The special needs bank

It had been a hot and tedious morning. The last item on the agenda had at last been reached. Mr Jones introduced it with some trepidation, feeling that the shareholders may be more sensitive to this issue than most. He had therefore decided to give some preamble. He explained that, as manager of the bank, it had come to his attention that there had been a notable increase in the use of banking facilities by disabled clients, possibly due to the recent opening of a group home, and the extension, of facilities at a nearby technical college. Anyway whatever the cause the effect was certainly being felt. The commissioner at the door had complained about the problems of getting wheelchairs up the steps; several cashiers had mentioned the difficulty they had in understanding what two customers in particular wanted; and, recently Mr Sharp, a client of long standing, had complained to him personally that the time given to some of these handicapped people necessitated him queuing for an unreasonable period. His knowledge of Mr Sharp made him suspect that, although he would not admit it, he was also embarrassed by having to share HIS bank with the disabled. The last straw had come when Miss Bloom, the chief cashier, had burst into tears after questioning the signature of a customer, only to discover he had recently had to change hands for writing following a stroke. Certainly, Miss Bloom's 'mistake' did not warrant the abuse she felt she received.

The proposal then put before the shareholders was that the bank should take action by positively discriminating in favour of its disabled customers. One of the cashiers, who had a handicapped brother, had volunteered to go on a specialist training course. Planning permission had been obtained to build a new entrance with a ramp - the entrance being at the rear of the building which would make it easier to get wheelchairs in and out of cars in the little used side street. This ramp would lead to a separate room where special facilities could be provided.

At this point Mr Jones was taken aback when a shareholder questioned whether the disabled would appreciate this arrangement and whether it was in their best interest. He patiently explained the advantages. The more favourable customer-cashier ratio would allow more time to be spent with each disabled person. The concentration of resources in the special room would provide the most appropriate help economically. Other customers would receive a better service, and employees in the bank would be much happier with the arrangements.

After further discussion, the motion was put to the vote.

Would you vote for Mr Jones' proposal?

SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Unit 2.6

Perspectives on disability

Unit aim

To provide an opportunity for participants to hear the experiences of an individual who has a disability.

Activities

1 Form groups of between six and ten members.

2 In a short time your group will be joined by an adult who has a disability. You will be given some details about this person. You should see the visitor as a 'resource'—somebody who can inform your thinking about disability. As a group, plan how you will deal with your visitor. You should aim to make the visit an enjoyable and useful experience for everybody involved. Remember your visitor may well be nervous at the thought of meeting new people.

3 At the end of the meeting discuss with the visitor what has been learned from the experience.

4 Share the outcomes of your discussions with other groups.

Evaluation issues

1 What did you learn from the visitor?

2 Do you think the visitor gained anything from the experience?

Unit 2.7

Integration in action

Unit aim

To provide an opportunity for participants to consider approaches for dealing with special needs in ordinary schools.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Some Teachers' Stories'.
2. In groups of about six people consider the stories. What are the important messages that come out of these accounts? What can we learn from them about ways of responding to special needs in ordinary schools?
3. As a group construct a list of advice that you would give to help teachers respond to special needs in ordinary schools. Use ideas from the stories as well as your experience.
4. One member of your group should give an account of your list of advice to all the other participants. Discuss the variations between the various lists presented.

Evaluation issues

1. What has been most significant for you about these discussions?
2. Are there aspects of your classroom practice that you may wish to review as a result of this activity?

Rebecca Muvuah

'My name is Rebecca Muvuah. I am a teacher by profession. Currently I am teaching at the Muranga Road Primary School in Nairobi. I teach Class 2. In my class I have Judith Anyango, a disabled girl. She joined this school in January 1988. When I came across her for the first time I did not believe I could handle such a child in my class. So my prayer was that she did not fall in my class this year.

Well in January this year, after the re-arrangements, the girl landed in my class. I had no alternative but to accept her like any other child. My first clue was to get in touch with the standard one teacher and the parents too so that they could give me a brief account of her background. My co-teacher stressed on love as the key factor to my success with this pupil.

From her mother I learned that Judith was the first born of the couple. Being the first born they do not accept her to be disabled at all. I also understand that in Luo customs having a disabled child has a lot of meaning so that these parents being Luos they could not accept that their first-born was disabled. Because I did not wish to frustrate them any how I gave up the idea of advising them to take their child to special school.

Judith is disabled in the sense that her left-hand side looks paralysed. She limps when walking and her left hand cannot hold up anything properly. Again she forgets very quickly. If she goes out alone she cannot trace her way back to her class. If she comes into the class she will take a lot of time to remember where she was sitting. That means I have to give her somebody to take her out and bring her back. Again if something small knocks her she will fall down but can stand on her own. That means she doesn't need anybody to help her stand.

As far as writing is concerned, right now she can write her name but the rest of the writing she only does some scribbling without meaning at all. During teaching the method I have seen that she can catch up with is the so-called look-and-say method. That is, show her a picture or an object and tell her a name. When you come to her next day show her the same objects and she will definitely give you the name without problems at all; only that she cannot write the name down.

Well, for her to answer the question you put across to her, for her to give you the feedback, you have got to smile. That means you have to look loving to her. I think that by smiling to her she feels loved and accepted. That's why the standard one teacher stressed on love as the key factor to everything.

Again, she can write the numbers from one to ten. She doesn't know the meaning of these numbers. Well, I involve her in activities in class. For example, when there are papers lying on the floor I pick her plus some other few children and tell them to pick them up. By so doing, you know, she feels accepted in that community. She is very interested in such activities. When we go out for science activities she participates depending on what I give her. That is, if I am rude to her or become harsh, you know, she will not answer any questions. But if I look loving she will definitely tell me what I want. She also likes P.E. If she tries she can run for a short distance and enjoy it. When we come to art and craft, with things like modelling, she participates well. She can model something if you say, Judith pick some clay here, make something like an animal or an object she will make it for you. When she does such things I comment on them very much like telling the rest of the children to clap for her and she becomes happy and tries more next time. That is I give her courage by so doing.

When the rest are doing some exercises in class like English, I attend to her individually. That is I give her some exercises like drawing, colouring or learning pictures from me. I keep her close to me. That means I have to attend to her individually. I don't find any difficulties.

I've tried my best and right now she can at least do something. If she is able to model or to answer me oral questions I think she still has the time to improve.

Right now I am used to her. I don't see any difficulties, I don't fear her the way I felt when I first came across her. I have accepted her like the other children you know. The feeling came to me that this child can be my child so I asked myself the question, what can I do if this way my own child?

I came up with accepting her and giving her any kind of help I think I can give.

Right now my opinion as a teacher, I feel that these disabled children should mix up with the rest, compete in different aspects. Otherwise, I feel that if they stay on their own in their community they can feel neglected and somehow unwanted or unfit. But when they come together with the rest they feel that they are part and parcel of this community and there is nothing wrong in them.

You know, there are some kinds of disabilities, for example some children are lame, they cannot walk properly; others do not have their hands. But academically they can be so good. Then, why not have them compete in the class with the rest and prove to the rest that being lame doesn't mean you cannot do well.

It is a difficulty to handle them when there are many in the class because they need a lot of attention. If they could be distributed say 5 or 6 per class I think the teachers can attend them properly. For example a child can be disabled and yet come up with very interesting work and paint properly, model something nicely, make some musical instruments properly too. I don't see why we shouldn't have these children in the same class with the rest.

So I think my opinion is that we should have such children in the class together with the rest but this depends upon the kind of disability the child has. If he is unable to catch anything in the class then that one is different. But for those who can be brought into class and get something they should be put with the rest. They are difficult to handle but once one is patient you get on with them. Thank you'.

September 1989

Carol Jennings

My name is Carol Jennings and I am a teacher in a primary school in Kings Lynn, England. My account is about the work I have carried out over the last three years. This involves children with severe learning difficulties from a local special school visiting my class to take part in lessons.

The first children involved were top infants, which is 6 to 7 years of age. The children who were coming to visit them from the special school were about nine years of age. They were a similar height to my children. We selected them because we thought small children could be 'babied' and large children might be frightening.

So we had 13 children and a teacher come to us in the first place. One was in a wheelchair. The others had a variety of disabilities, including Down's Syndrome and others. There were 34 children in my own class.

I explained to my children that we were going to have some visitors from another school in Kings Lynn and that the children were different to them in some ways. They might speak differently to them, they might behave differently to them or they might look differently to them. I did not know the special school children at this stage so I could not be more specific. I told them that these children were coming just to play with them. I also sent a letter home to the parents, of course, so that I had their backing as well. Some of my class knew some people at the special school because the school is not very far away.

When the children arrived we split both groups in half. The special school teacher had one half and I had the other half. This made the numbers a bit more manageable. We were lucky that we had two classrooms available. One group did pottery whilst the other did a variety of things. I did the pottery which was quite interesting. I had two fourth year helpers (i.e. 11 year olds) with me who had opted to come and help. Their own teacher had told them that there would be these visitors from the special school and they wanted to help. I had a couple of parent helpers as well and I had a welfare assistant from the special school. So we had quite a few helpers. We could have done with more actually in pottery because of the sharp implements. But it was quite fun. Every child made a thumb pot that week with me. All the other children learnt some songs with Makaton signs and they generally played. This was the first time I had ever done anything like this. We agreed at the outset that there would be a series of weekly visits. If it had been a disaster we would have abandoned it. So the first time was to test it and see how it would work. I had never worked with children with severe learning difficulties before. But I just did it by instinct really, realizing that everything had to be explained very carefully and also that they would learn by imitation, to a certain extent, from the other children.

That was the first lesson and then we went on from there. We developed it into more peer tutoring sessions. In other words I would pair one or two of my children with one of the pupils from the special school so they could help them. That worked very well indeed, even when we did painting, pottery or played games. I said to my children, who would you like to work with this week? All the children selected partners to work with very sensibly. We still worked in two halves that year because with 47 children we had to do something. In fact, we lost one child. We asked for him not to come because he was very, very disruptive. So that lost one.

The visiting teacher did things like printing, painting and various games in the hall, with bean bags and hoops for example. She also did singing and signing. It was a nice summer so she also went outside and did things. We also had a lot of games and construction toys that we set out and the children played with them. They interacted very well. It was much better in that situation than in my situation in the pottery where it was much more formal.

After the first week we swapped over and the second group of children came to do pottery. And then we carried on swapping the two halves from week to week. I didn't find that my children were scared or nervous. There was no reaction really against the visiting children. They homed in on certain children. Some of the visitors were very uncommunicative and my children were not so affectionate towards them as to the others. They nevertheless tried all the time; they were never put off.

My children did get nervous when I took them to visit the special school. I took them to an assembly. I don't think I had prepared them sufficiently. There are some large people at the special school, 19 year olds, for example, and some of them do have strange deformities. In particular there is one young man who only has one eye in the middle of his forehead. My children were very, very frightened. Until, as we left the hall, this particular man came up and kissed my hand. He said, 'Thank you for coming.' My children were a bit startled; they were worried but at the same time it put them in a situation where they really had to think. This chap had kissed my hand and I was really flattered by that and so the children said, he can't be that bad. But they were frightened and they told me they were frightened. We discussed it later and they were better after that.

I have never known the children be frightened here, in this school. Sometimes they are not so keen to hold hands, perhaps, in a particular game. But then there are children who don't like holding hands anyway. With children of this age when they see others enjoying themselves they don't want to be left out.

If I was advising other teachers who wanted to have a go at this kind of thing I would ask them to be sure that they really wanted to do it. You must not put up excuses like: I don't know how to do it, my children might react badly, the parents might react badly, etc. If people are really committed, all these things are so easy to overcome. They just don't count. So the first thing is commitment.

From then on you obviously have to talk to the children about it. You have to be willing to answer their questions without being judgmental. It is so easy to jump when a child says such a person is so horrible or so ugly. You mustn't be judgmental; you've just got to be honest. Also you've got to prepare other people within the school. It is important that the people the visitors meet don't shy away from them. You've got to prepare the other teachers as well. And, you've got to prepare the parents. Now I just wrote home to parents explaining about the visitors and saying that if they wanted to come and talk about it I would be here after school. None of them did actually. But I did that so that when the children went home with the story the parents wouldn't say, those terrible children from that special school, or start talking about those 'weird' children.

So those are the important things: commitment, preparation of the children, preparation of the staff and preparation of parents. I also think you need to aim for co-operative activities. Things like pottery are fine, they can be done. But the children tend to have to work on their own. It is better to provide activities where children have to work together. I also think peer coaching is a good thing. It means that the mainstream children are coaching rather than smothering. As soon as they realize that the people they are coaching are really quite able, can do things for themselves, they stop 'babying' them.

I talk to my children about how to deal with the visitors. In particular I talk to them about how to deal with the visitors if they behave badly. For example, if one of the visiting children starts pinching or hitting. Our children are very passive about things like that because of the ideology of the school. We don't have bullying, our playtimes are very happy times. The children seem to be generally calm and creative. So we have to say to our children that they should be firm, just say, 'No, don't do it'. They were very worried about upsetting the visiting children's feelings. They would say, 'John keeps pinching me and I don't know what to do about it'. We really had to teach them how to deal with deviant behaviour. I understand that the visiting children's behaviour is different at this school from their own school. They are much more independent, much less attention-seeking and they socialize more. Apparently their language has improved. They speak a lot more to our children because our children speak to them.

To our children it makes them much more tolerant, I believe. Even though our children are very kind on the whole, children are very conformist. They don't like things that are different from the norm. Meeting the special school children makes them more tolerant of differences between people.

Unit 2.8

Looking at integration

Unit aim

To use school visits to consider policies for integrating pupils with disabilities.

Activities

1. Arrange a visit to a school or class where you believe attempts are made to integrate pupils with disabilities. If possible, make the visit with one or more of the other course participants.
2. Write a short account of your visit. In particular write about the factors that seem to be helpful in integrating pupils with disabilities.
3. In small groups read the account of each visit. Then try to agree a list of points that seem to be important for successful integration. Your question is, what can schools do to help pupils with disabilities?
4. Share your findings with the other groups.

Evaluation issues

1. What have you learned from this experience?
2. Is there anything you need to do in your own classroom to help pupils with disabilities?

Unit 2.9

The needs of teachers

Unit aim

To help participants consider strategies for meeting the 'special needs' of teachers.

Activities

1 Read the discussion mentioned, 'Support for Teachers'.

2 On four separate sheets of paper write your answers to the following questions:

- What are the pressures you experience in your teaching?
- How do you cope with these pressures?
- What are your reactions to pressures that are not coped with?
- What are your recommendations for reducing stress in schools?

3 Form four working groups. Each group should have all the answers to one of the questions. Interpret these answers and produce a summary of your findings on a large sheet of paper.

4 Each group should present its findings in turn.
[Do not sign these sheets. Your answers should remain anonymous.]

Evaluation issues

1 Are you making the best use of available resources to deal with the pressures in your work?

2 Is there a programme of staff support in your school? How might it be improved?

Discussion material

Support for teachers

It is now recognized that many children may experience some form of difficulty at some stage during their school career. One way in which schools can do a better job of responding to pupil's special needs is through the introduction of more effective strategies for supporting individual teachers in their work.

This material looks at the difficulties individual teachers may have in terms of the stress placed on them by changes in the education system and then investigates the forms of support which are available.

Stress and teaching

Despite the fact that stress is a common feature of our lives, little attention is paid to analysing how it arises, its effects, and how it can best be coped with. Indeed the concept of stress, or teacher "burn out", frequently provokes amusement rather than serious discussion. It can therefore be difficult for teachers to admit that they are under stress for fear that it may be interpreted as a manifestation of weariness or inability. It would, however, be misleading to see stress as a totally negative and unavoidably harmful experience. More usefully, stress in teaching can be described as the perception of problems or demands that necessitate the adoption of resources for coping. Consequently stress can encourage growth towards better teaching as well as being counter productive.

There are three main ways of approaching the problem of stress. Firstly, it is possible to look at the pressures on teachers; that is, it is assumed that certain events in the environment will be perceived as giving rise to stressful situations.

The sources of environmental stress are twofold—poor working conditions and changes which alter the nature of the job. Poor working conditions include inadequate material resources, poorly designed buildings, loud noise, staff relationships which are unsupportive, and low pay and prospects for promotion.

Changes which alter the nature of the job can be organizational changes at both school and local authority level, alteration of public expectations, introduction of new teaching methods, change of role, etc.

The second approach to understanding how stress arises involves examining teachers' responses to different stressful situations. Individuals will find different ways to cope with the same problems, and what suits one person may not suit another. However, not all people find successful coping strategies so that their response may be anxiety which eventually leads to illness.

Lastly an interactional approach can provide an explanation of the effects of stress. Whilst looking at environmental factors the interactional approach also takes into account the teacher's own strengths and weaknesses.

How stress can grow

One useful way for discussing teacher stress is to identify the successive stages teachers pass through as a result of their increasingly severe reactions to stressful situations. One such sequential framework is offered below:

Stage One

The teacher uses old or newly acquired coping actions, including professional skills, after becoming aware of increasing demands. For example a teacher faced with a child who is failing to learn a new maths concept may seek the advice of a colleague and consequently incorporate a new skill into her own teaching experience.

Stage Two

The teacher continually fails to cope with the demands made on her and begins to question her own competence. To continue our example—the teacher says 'perhaps it's my fault that child isn't learning that new idea'.

Stage Three

The unresolved feelings of failure may lead to more generalized effects, perhaps causing the onset of psychosomatic illnesses. The pattern of teacher stress suggested by this analysis is that unless successful self or externally motivated intervention occurs at Stage One, then *frustration* leads to *anxiety* which in turn leads to *illness*.

Factors which precipitate stress

A number of studies have been conducted into the characteristics of jobs which are related to stress. They suggest that the following factors are of particular relevance in all jobs, whether or not they are related to education:

1 *Role ambiguity and conflict*

Recently there has been much debate about the role of education, schools and teachers. Many would feel that the role has broadened and that greater consideration now has to be given to being a teacher of children as well as a teacher of a particular subject. Also, questions of responsibility arise. To whom is the teacher responsible, the child, parent, school, community or society?

2 *Role overload*

Teachers are being expected to take on more in terms of their role. In addition to curriculum and organizational changes which affect role definition, teachers are being required to broaden their role to cover more pastoral and administrative aspects.

3 *Interaction across organizational boundaries*

Teachers are obviously required to interact with colleagues in school who may not only have different role, but also different perceptions of what the job is about. In addition, teachers are part of a multi-disciplinary team working with colleagues outside the school, and parents, who may also have different perceptions of what should be happening within the classroom.

4 *Responsibility for people*

A feature of all the caring professions is that they involve dealing with people. This is particularly the case in teaching where a teacher may have to make contact with many individuals in a week, possibly making decisions which will shape their lives. Such a responsibility is increased by public accountability when mistakes are open to scrutiny.

5 *Lack of participation*

At the level of the classroom teachers may feel they have a reasonable degree of autonomy. However, how much can teachers control outside the classroom? Major decisions at a school or government level can be taken, over which individuals feel they have little input or control.

Teacher support

Having looked at how stress can arise, and the effects it can have, it is important to look at methods for dealing with the problem. Broadly two approaches can be adopted—either measures are taken to reduce the number of stressful situations which arise; or coping strategies are developed so that teachers become better able to deal with the harmful effects of stress. These two approaches will be examined in turn.

A variety of strategies can be adopted to decrease the possibility of stressful situations arising, although, even if it were considered desirable, not all such situations can be eliminated. These fall into three main categories as follows:

1 *Personal*

This is the most likely form of reaction to stress. In a personal response teachers solve their own problems, either in terms of learning how to cope or by adopting increased professional skills.

Learning how to cope may involve developing outside interests or hobbies, discussion with colleagues, friends, or relations and isolation from work-oriented activities. Increased professional skills may involve developing strategies ranging from minor administrative changes to learning when to say 'no'. Such skills are facilitated by the school accepting its responsibility in providing small-scale in-service opportunities.

2 *Interpersonal*

The teacher should feel able to talk to other professionals about concerns, without a sense of threat or owning up to weakness. The development of teamwork can also be of help in supporting staff, provided that such teams engender feelings of confidence and mutual trust. Meetings can then be problem oriented, where difficulties are shared and possible solutions explored.

3 *Organizational*

This is the form of support offered intentionally by a school in order to alleviate the possible effects of stress. These may be termed 'Structured Support Systems'. This idea is discussed in the next section.

Structured school support system

It is perhaps wisest to accept that an atmosphere of teamwork, promoted through the sharing of expertise and experience does not happen without a conscious effort being made by the management of the school. It has to be made to happen. In the same way, how teachers related to one another will be a direct determinant of the support systems within schools facilitate an atmosphere that encourages teachers to share their concerns, rather than keep them to themselves.

At least three ways of organizing support systems can be illustrated:

1 A school may decide to operate in teams, either reflecting the proximity of classroom areas or curriculum subjects. A programme of lesson visits and exchanges or video-based discussions is used to encourage the creation of a non-threatening environment for the discussion of areas likely to cause difficulties.

2 A voluntary 'self-help' group may operate within school. The group identifies areas to be discussed and agrees that each person in the group shall take it in turn to talk about one area of school life that concerns them.

3 A more formal approach is the 'Staff Problem Solving Group'. This has carefully laid down guidelines to facilitate the discussion of individual children in such a way as to simultaneously enable support to be received by individual children as well as by individual teachers. The group agrees on the incidence of the child's problems, with whom it mostly occurs, which teachers get on well with the child, what the child's perceptions of the problem are, and then *as a whole group*, decides what should be done about it. This action is then reviewed after an agreed period of time, and the whole group meet again to consider what to do next.

SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Module 3

Towards effective schools for all

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Guide

This unit explains in more detail the idea of seeing special needs as a curriculum issue. The emphasis is on providing classroom conditions that encourage the learning of all pupils. This requires us to see differences between pupils as a resource for enriching learning activities. Where pupils experience learning difficulties these can help us to improve the quality of our teaching. Given these arguments the question is: How can teachers improve their practice with respect to ways of responding to individuals within a class? In thinking about the curriculum it is important to bear in mind the distinction between what is intended and what actually happens. Often the planned curriculum takes on a very different form as it is enacted in the complex social scene of the classroom. We are keen to keep your focus on the reality of what happens in your classroom. In particular, we want you to compare your practice with observations of some of the ways in which other teachers operate.

The traditional response of the school system to children experiencing difficulty in learning was to assume that this was as a result of children's limitations, disabilities or disadvantages. Learning difficulties were assumed to lie within children. Consequently the aim was to determine what was wrong with the child so as to decide what to do in order to improve the situation. This approach was based upon what we have called an individual pupil view of educational difficulties.

Increasingly in recent years the limitations of this approach have come to be recognized. First and foremost this has led to an understanding that assuming that learning difficulties rested within children tended to lead us to label some children as being different or special. The outcomes of this approach were that these pupils were expected to achieve less and, as a result, were given less challenging tasks that emphasized the idea that they were inadequate. Frequently the tasks they were set required them to work alone, either within the class or in a separate area of the school. Consequently, as well as not experiencing the stimulation and challenge offered to the rest of the class, they were also disadvantaged by not having the support and encouragement of working collaboratively with their classmates.

The overall feature of so much of the traditional remedial response came to be one of narrowness of opportunity. In other words the curriculum offered to this group of children was both limited and limiting.

In recognition of this argument there have been moves in recent years to find new ways of responding to children experiencing difficulties in ordinary classrooms. Such moves assume that difficulties arise because of the interaction of a whole range of factors, some of which lie within children, others connected with decisions made by teachers. The recognition of this fact leads to an optimistic frame of mind. It reminds us that what teachers do, the decisions they make, the experiences they provide, and the relationships they have with their pupils, all have a major influence on children's learning. In this way we are seeing educational difficulties in curriculum terms.

The new thinking also takes account of the dangers associated with the idea of labelling. Instead of grouping children together because they are seen as being 'special' or 'remedial' it works from the assumption that all children are special. Consequently the aim must be to respond to all pupils as individuals, recognizing individuality as something to be respected. This leads us, of course, to the central issue faced by all teachers: how can teaching be made more responsive to the needs of individual pupils?

In this study material we provide a review of the evidence that arises from research about teaching, particularly with respect to teachers who are effective in responding to individual pupils within the curriculum, with a view to making some suggestions. We also describe the features of schools that seem to be effective in providing successful learning conditions for all pupils.

This account is not intended to be prescriptive. We are not providing a list of things to do in order to become a more successful teacher. Rather, we are saying that these seem to be some of the common features of effective teaching and successful schools. Together they provide a useful agenda for you to consider and talk with your colleagues about.

There are three features of teaching that seem to us to be essential to success. These are:

1 Teachers have to know their pupils well in terms of their existing skills and knowledge, their interests, and their previous experience.

2 Pupils have to be helped to establish a sense of personal meaning about the tasks and activities in which they are engaged.

3 Classrooms have to be organized in ways that encourage involvement and effort.

Successful teachers achieve these features in different ways. Teaching is a very creative activity and can be practised in many different ways. Overall, however, successful teachers seem to achieve their aims by emphasizing the following ideas:

1 Purpose

2 Variety and choice

3 Reflection and review

4 Flexible use of resources

5 Co-operation

We will look at these ideas in more detail. As we do so you should think about your own ways of teaching.

Purpose

Children who are not getting on with their work in class almost always seem to lack understanding as to the purpose of what they have been asked to do. Invariably they will say, if asked, that they are doing something because they have been asked to do so by their teacher. Indeed it is surprising how willing children are to continue trying hard to complete assignments that must seem pointless.

Learning is about finding personal meanings from experience. It requires us to understand what we are about and relate this to our existing knowledge and previous experience. Consequently, if we are unclear about the purpose of an activity, learning is less likely. Effective teachers stress meaning in their work. They find ways of helping their pupils understand the purposes of particular tasks, the reasons they have been set, how they are to be carried out and by when. As a result, their pupils are able to take responsibility for their own learning and, therefore, work with a strong sense of purpose.

The question is, how do teachers help pupils to have a greater understanding of the nature and purposes of the tasks that are set? Different teachers have different strategies that seem to work for them in this respect. It is partly a matter of style and personal preference.

Some teachers, for example, prefer a fairly direct approach, characterized by an emphasis on telling. The way in which they help their pupils to understand what is going on is by careful explanation and demonstration. On the other hand, some teachers prefer a less directive style, seeking to encourage understanding by discussion and negotiation with their pupils.

There are advantages and disadvantages in either style. The more directive teacher tends to organize activities in ways that allow them time to talk to pupils as a class or in groups. Consequently the time spent on discussions that are focused on the content of a particular activity is relatively high.

The problem may be that some members of the class will find the explanations difficult to follow. On the other hand, a less directive teacher may emphasize discussion with individuals or small groups whilst moving around the room observing the pupils at work and intervening where necessary. This allows opportunity to pitch explanations at a level appropriate for particular pupils, and check understanding by informal questions. The obvious problem here is that with large classes it will take time to get around to all members of the class.

Accepting that individual differences of teaching style should exist, there is a good case for the use of a variety of approaches for emphasizing meaning. At times the use of clear presentations to a whole class, perhaps supplemented by a demonstration, is an effective way of talking to pupils at a level that can inspire and stimulate their thinking, particularly where the topic under consideration lends itself to a formal explanation. When this approach is used, however, it is vital to check the children's understanding by questioning and asking individuals to outline what they have understood by what has been said.

The work of the teacher whilst children are actively engaged in activities is critical to the encouragement of greater understanding. It is in the nature of some tasks that children get clear indications as to the success or otherwise of their efforts. For example, with certain motor tasks such as catching a ball, children know how well they are performing although they may still need guidance as to how they might improve. With many classroom tasks, however, pupils may not know if they are on the right lines. Indeed they may carry on in an inappropriate way, possibly practising errors.

Effective teachers seem to find ways of keeping the whole class busy in order that they can engage individuals or small groups in detailed discussions about what they are doing and why. Organization of time and resources is obviously critical in this respect and we will return to this topic later.

Points to consider

- What is your usual teaching style?
- How do you encourage understanding of tasks and activities in your classroom?

Variety and choice

The audience in front of the teacher is a captive one—it is required to be there. Nevertheless, teaching is to some degree show business. Our task as teachers is in part, at least, to entertain. Whilst there is a need for challenge and pressure in order to motivate effort, a degree of audience appeal is also a necessary feature of effective teaching.

We start out, of course, with some advantages. Most children are interested in learning. They want to find out more about the world. By and large they are also keen to please their teachers and gain the approval of their classmates. Our task is to mobilize their curiosity and desire for recognition, stimulate it, inform it and direct it towards topics and issues that are worthy of attention.

One of the keys to audience appeal in any setting, including classrooms, is variety. This means variety in terms of both what is done and how. Effective teachers plan their lessons in order to offer their pupils a range of different topics and a variety of learning contexts within which to work. They also look to offer variety through their use of diverse classroom materials.

Another important reason for emphasizing variety is to do with the individual differences of pupils. Offering them the opportunity to take part in different types of learning encounter can help them to become more aware of themselves as learners. Our aim must be not only to teach our children interesting and useful facts and skills, but also to enable them to become more effective learners. That is to say, we want them to become learners who are autonomous, capable of finding the information they need, sensitive to their own preferred ways of learning and confident to attempt problems of a type they have not previously met.

Effective teachers help their pupils to become more confident and independent learners by offering them a range of different learning experiences and, then, by encouraging them to reflect upon these.

Another feature that seems to be common to the work of many effective teachers is an emphasis on giving pupils choice. This can have a number of positive effects.

First of all, allowing pupils to choose, to some extent, what they do, how and when,

is a way of encouraging understanding. It allows them opportunity to relate classroom activities to their own experiences and their existing knowledge. Indeed it can be argued that as teachers we must find ways of ensuring that children bring aspects of their personal culture into the classroom in order to facilitate meaning but, also, as a source of enrichment. Too often, for example, children from other countries or families that have adopted unusual life styles, are seen as 'having problems'. Instead, we need to recognize that they bring with them knowledge, ideas and perspectives that can be used to illuminate the understanding of those with whom they come into contact.

Secondly, encouraging pupils to choose can help teachers to get better at setting tasks and activities more appropriately. Children know things about themselves that we can never know. Consequently we can utilize their self-knowledge by inviting them to participate in classroom decision making.

Thirdly, choice is a way of helping children to take more responsibility for their own learning. Simply by offering it, the teacher is suggesting to the class that their views are important and that they are trusted to make significant decisions. Giving pupils trust and respect encourages them to value themselves as learners.

Pupils need help as well as encouragement to choose. First of all, of course, there have to be things to choose from; hence the need for variety of experience. Secondly, they need explanation and examples of how to make choices. For example, one teacher recommends the idea of the 'five finger exercise' when children are choosing books to read. He suggests to pupils that if they see a book they might like they should try reading a page, counting on their fingers the number of words with which they have difficulty. If it comes to more than five on the page it may be too difficult, although even then, if the child is really keen to read the book, he or she may choose to try.

Things to consider

- Do you offer your pupils variety and choice?
- What difficulties do you see with these ideas?

Reflection and review

We have already emphasized the importance of knowing about pupils, their skills and knowledge, their interests and attitudes, and their previous experiences. Teachers learn more about the members of their classes by careful observation and systematic monitoring of their progress. This is another of the noticeable skills of successful teachers. Through their methods of monitoring they evaluate the decisions they have made in terms of their appropriateness for individual members of the class. They also give pupils comments on the way they are attempting to carry out their tasks.

It is important to recognize the importance of this form of feedback. Young people learn as a result of their success and their failures. Consequently, feedback from their teacher, or their classmates, can provide guidance and encouragement that will help them to improve their performance. In particular their errors should be corrected as soon as possible to prevent these from being practised. A pupil's efforts can usually be characterized in one of the following ways:

- incorrect and lacking understanding
- incorrect but careless
- correct but hesitant
- correct, quick and firm

Understanding which of these ways it is helps in deciding what action is necessary. Of course some activities lend themselves to children taking responsibility for monitoring their own progress, possibly by keeping some form of written record.

A variety of approaches can be used for checking understanding. They will, of course, vary depending on the nature of the task. Some of the rather obvious but nevertheless effective, methods we have observed include:

- having all pupils write their answers while the teacher circulates carrying out checks;
- having all pupils write their answers and check with a neighbour;
- calling on pupils whose hands are not raised during questioning;
- writing the main points on the blackboard and asking the pupils to summarize these in groups.

Many activities lend themselves to children taking responsibility for their own progress. So, for example, certain number schemes encourage children to keep a record of assignment cards completed. Some teachers ask children to write a review of the books they read, giving some personal comment.

Another useful approach is, at the end of an activity or, indeed, at the end of the day, to get children to talk in pairs or small groups about what they have been doing, what they have achieved, what was significant and how they feel about it. Our experience is that if children (even quite young children) are given guidance and encouragement they will become very actively involved in this form of self-review, often surprising their teachers by their understanding and sensitivity. Indeed, we know of one primary school where this approach is introduced during the children's first few months in school. Consequently they grow up through the school expecting to be involved in regular sessions of reflection and self-review. By the time they get to the top of the school, all the children have become sophisticated in this aspect of their school life, even those who are perceived as being less successful in many aspects of their learning.

Things to consider

- How do you give feedback to your pupils?
- Could your pupils be given more responsibility for monitoring their own progress?

Flexible use of resources

Teaching is essentially about the use of time—the pupils' time and the teachers' time. Well organized classrooms are geared to facilitate the effective use of time. Materials and equipment are stored in a way that enables them to be located when needed, thus allowing the children to be relatively independent of their teacher.

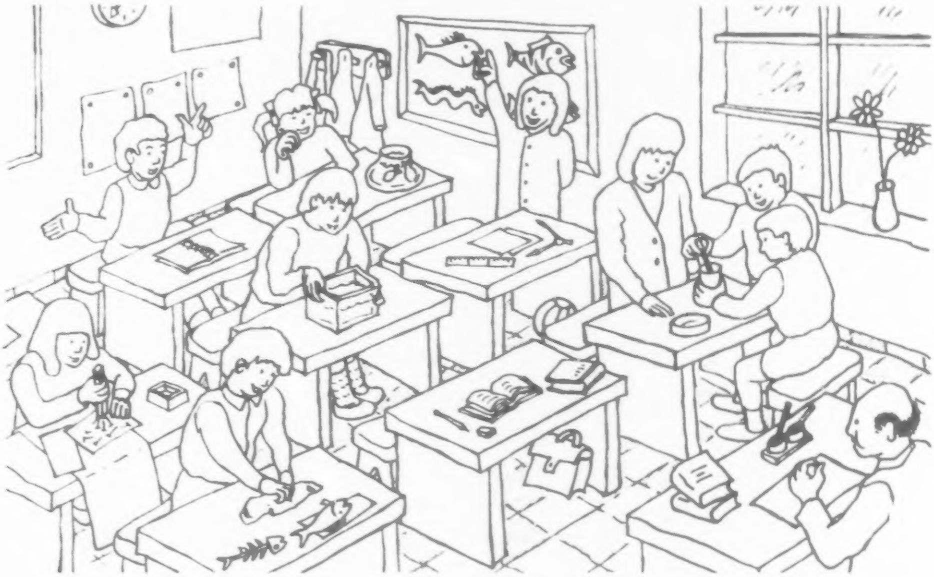
On the other hand in less well-organized classrooms pupils remain dependent on their teacher for materials, corrections, and decisions about the direction of their work. Consequently the teacher's time is drained away dealing with routine organizational and administrative matters.

The two most significant resources for learning in any classroom are the teacher and the pupils. The use of their time is, therefore, critical to effective teaching and learning.

It is often when children are asked to carry out activities independently that most difficulties occur. The teacher faces the difficulty of how to ensure that all members of the class are working appropriately; the children face possible difficulties as they work with less direction or supervision.

The aim of independent activity is often to enable pupils to practise and apply previously acquired skills and knowledge. Opportunities for extended practice can, under certain circumstances, be significant in helping children to succeed where they had previously failed. They are of little benefit, however, if a child has not got the skills and understanding necessary for completing the task with a reasonable level of success. Hence the art is to know when children have reached a stage in their learning at which they can be left to carry on with less supervision.

Often when pupils experience difficulties with their work it is as a result of their setting off without a firm understanding of what they are doing. In other words, their lack of success is, at least in part, an outcome of the teacher's inadequacies in introducing new ideas or material, and in providing effective forms of guided practice. It further emphasizes the need for careful monitoring of children's understanding during the early stages



of learning about new ideas or when developing new skills.

The teacher's movement during periods of independent activity can also be an important factor in keeping pupils involved in their assigned tasks. Effective teachers tend to be very active, encouraging and praising the children's efforts. They try to keep these interactions short and to the point in order that attention is shared around all members of the class. Invariably where a teacher finds that she is having to spend long periods re-explaining points to a lot of individuals this is an indication that the initial explanations and periods of guided practice were in some way inadequate.

Where there is more than one adult in the classroom—for example, team teaching, classroom assistants or parent helpers—further options are available for giving pupils additional help. Where such arrangements are unplanned, however, the benefits of the additional help may be limited. Indeed, it is possible that the presence of an additional adult can lead to less teaching and the social isolation of particular pupils. The implication of all of this is that the teacher needs to manage time and materials in ways that allow maximum opportunity for interaction with children. This is surely the priority for the teacher.

An important way in which teachers can find time for all of this is to be more effective in their use of the other major resources for learning in any classroom, the pupils. This leads on to our last point.

Things to consider

- Can you think of ways in which your classroom organization might be developed?
- How do you find time to give attention to individual pupils?

Co-operation

An important way in which teachers can find time for all of this is to be more effective in their use of the other major resources for learning in any classroom, the pupils.

The ideas presented in these materials assume that classrooms are places where children and adults are skilful in working together, sharing their ideas and supporting one another. They are based on the assumption that there are, as we have suggested, two major resources for learning, the teacher and the children. They also assume that teachers have skills in organizing their classes in ways that encourage co-operation.

It is still common to see pupils working alone for large parts of the school day. Often they are seated in groups, but it is still quite rare to see them carrying out their tasks collaboratively. It is difficult to know why this is so, although one possible explanation is that many teachers have not received training in ways of organizing group work in the classroom.

Whilst working alone on individualised tasks is an important and legitimate approach for all children, used excessively it is a limited and limiting form of learning. This has been recognized in some schools, where attempts are being made to encourage pupils to become more skilful in learning co-operatively. This is not an easy task since it requires a sophistication of classroom organization for which many teachers feel ill-prepared. It also requires materials that encourage children to collaborate.

Where pupils are to be introduced to co-operative ways of working this has to be planned and introduced in a systematic way, as with any other new learning experience. Effectively it involves the introduction of an additional series of demands, requiring pupils to work towards objectives associated with the content of the curriculum at the same time as achieving new objectives to do with their skills in collaboration.

When this works well, the benefits are enormous. Co-operative learning that is successful can have a positive effect on academic outcomes, self-esteem, social relationships and personal development. Furthermore it has the potential to free teacher time as a result of making pupils less dependent on the teacher for help and support.

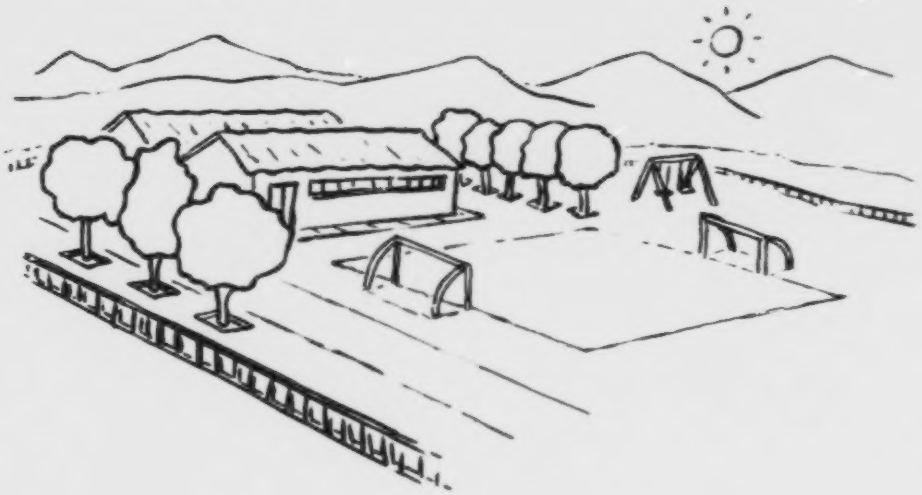
It is important to recognize that co-operative learning assumes a planned approach that goes well beyond a simple commitment to encouraging children to work together. It requires, for example, careful attention to:

- The setting of tasks in ways that necessitate collaboration.
- Helping pupils to recognize that their success is dependent to some degree upon the success of the other members of their group.
- Group size and membership that is appropriate given the skills and experience of the children, and the nature of the tasks that are set.
- The development of the pupils' skills in aspects of group working, including communication, sharing and decision making.

It is worth adding that teachers seem to be more successful in increasing their use of co-operative learning approaches in the context of a whole school development. In other words, co-operative learning in the classroom is facilitated by co-operative planning in the staff room.

Points to consider

- How do you feel about the idea of pupils working co-operatively in the classroom?
- What do you see as possible benefits of this way of working?



School policy

We have looked at some of the features of teaching that create conditions that help all children to learn. We have also asked you to consider your own practice with respect to these features. It is also necessary to think about overall school policy. This can be helpful in providing supportive conditions for individual teachers as they attempt to develop their practice.

As with teachers, successful schools operate in a variety of ways. There is no one way of making a school effective. It is important to recognize, however, that effective schools tend to be successful with all pupils. Indeed this is why they are so successful - they respond positively to pupils experiencing difficulty. In this way they are constantly seeking to improve the quality of education that is provided. The improvements that they make in response to those pupils experiencing difficulties provide better learning conditions for all pupils. Responding positively to special needs is a way of achieving effective schools for all.

Experience in many different countries suggests that there is a number of general features that are common to successful schools. These are as follows:

1 *Effective leadership from the senior management team who is committed to meeting the needs of all pupils*

The attitudes of senior staff (e.g. headteacher, deputy head) are critical to the success or otherwise of attempts to develop policies and practice in a school. They need to show by word and deed that they are committed to the venture (whatever it might be) and are prepared to take decisions that indicate that it is an area of priority. Particularly important is the way in which time is managed, resources allocated, and personal support and encouragement given to individuals who are expected to take a key role.

2 *Confidence amongst staff that they can help all children to learn*

Once again attitude of mind is central. In schools that are effective in responding to pupils who present particular challenges there is a sense of optimism amongst staff that recognizes that what they do can make a difference to children's lives. They work with confidence and high expectations of their own success, and these qualities are recognized by their pupils. Optimistic teachers lead to optimistic learners!

3 *A sense of optimism that all pupils can succeed*

This is linked with the above point. Unless staff feel confidence in what they are doing, they are unlikely to feel that they have something to offer to all their children. If pupils are to succeed, then the demands made of them must take account of their interests, experiences and existing attainments. There must also be a degree of flexibility within the school's organization.

4 *Arrangements for supporting individual members of staff*

Schools that are successful in meeting the special needs of children are also good at meeting the special needs of staff. An atmosphere of collaboration, sharing and support provides strength to staff and, in turn, leads them to create a similar ethos in their classroom. Consequently, when a school wishes to improve its work with children, it should start by improving its procedures for providing support to individual members of staff.

5 *A commitment to provide a broad range of curriculum opportunities for all children*

This requires a recognition that all pupils are entitled to participate in the same range of curriculum experiences. Such an approach is a significant change of emphasis from the traditional approach of remedial education as a means of helping pupils overcome their difficulties. It is also an approach that is very difficult to implement and requires considerable effort and flexibility on the part of teachers.

6 *Systematic procedures for monitoring and reviewing progress*

Schools that seem to be effective in helping all children to learn have agreed policies for monitoring progress on a continuous basis. The form and nature of such procedures can vary considerably, although the policy must be consistently applied throughout the school. The emphasis within such a policy is on recognizing the contributions of individuals, celebrating achievement, monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum and gathering information that can be used to make teaching more effective. In other words, breadth and balance in the curriculum are reflected in breadth and balance in recording progress.

Many schools have found it useful to carry out a review of existing policy and practice in order to agree a plan for development. Involving all staff in carrying out such a policy review can also be helpful in encouraging collaboration amongst teachers.

Points to consider

- How far do these six features apply to your school?
- What other features are important in making a school effective?

[illegible]

How can teachers help all their pupils to learn?
Three matters are important:

1 Teachers have to know their pupils well;
2 Pupils have to be helped to understand what they are trying to learn;
3 Classrooms have to be organized in ways that keep children busy.

Effective teachers help their pupils to learn by emphasizing:

1 Purpose
2 Variety and choice
3 Reflection and review
4 Flexible use of resources
5 Co-operation

Effective schools encourage individual teachers by providing:

1 Effective leadership
2 Confidence
3 A sense of optimism
4 Support
5 A commitment to curriculum breadth
6 Procedures for monitoring progress

The units that follow will help you to consider in more detail issues raised in the study material. Your course leader will explain how these units are to be dealt with.

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Unit 3.1

Assessing and recording progress

Unit aim

To review strategies for assessing and reviewing progress.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material 'Approaches to Assessment and Recording'.

2 In small groups discuss the study material. What issues arise from these ideas? What aspects would you as a group like to discuss in more detail?

3 On your own, complete the chart 'Finding Out'.

4 Compare your order of preference with others in your working group. What do you think is the explanation of differences between various individuals in the group?

5 Agree a statement as to what you have learned from these activities about assessment and recording. Report this statement to the rest of the course members.

Evaluation issues

1 How do the approaches to assessment and recording used in your own school relate to the ideas you have been discussing? What are their strengths? What are their limitations?

2 Would you like to develop any new approaches to assessment and recording in your own classroom?

Approaches to assessment and recording

It is important to note that we do not see assessment as a 'one-off' event in which classroom life stops in order that assessment can 'be done'. Neither is assessment the day in the school calendar on which the Head Teacher administers a reading test to the whole school.

Instead we believe that assessment should be the responsibility of all teachers and should be a continuous part of all teaching.

Assessment is a continuous process which involves reflecting upon and interpreting events and activities in the classroom as they happen. More than anything, else, therefore, assessment requires an attitude of mind that seeks out relevant information and responds to events as they occur.

All of this sounds rather grand and, perhaps, somewhat intimidating. We would stress, however, that we are not suggesting that any radically different approach be adopted. We are arguing simply that we look for ways of improving our capacity to learn from, and respond to, our own classroom experiences.

It is helpful to break down the process of assessment into three components. These are not discrete or independent elements and, in practice, overlap and even occur simultaneously. They are:

1 information gathering

2 review

3 action.

Let us consider these three aspects of the assessment process in more detail.

Information gathering

We must stress again that the major element necessary for the approach to assessment in the classroom that we are outlining is an attitude of mind. It is a recognition that what we already know and what we can find out as a result of our normal interactions with our pupils are the most significant forms of information that will lead to improvements in our teaching.

All of the methods discussed rely heavily on teacher observation. This emphasis is based upon the following assumptions:

- Since all teachers observe their pupils, it need not be a time-consuming affair to systematize this process so that the observations can be used to record relevant information.
- It is a flexible process capable of being adapted to meet varying needs and provide information about different aspects of classroom activity.
- It can be carried out regularly and form a normal part of classroom routine.
- With care, observations can be an accurate method of monitoring.

We will now examine those methods of gathering information in the classroom that seem to be most relevant and feasible for teachers in ordinary schools.

These are:

- discussion
- written notes
- schedules or checklists
- tests
- audio-visual recording.

Discussion

Arguably, discussion is the most common method used by teachers to understand and evaluate the effects of what goes on in their classrooms. This takes different forms depending to a large extent upon the personal style and preferences of the individual. In most primary classrooms it is a natural part of day-to-day encounters.

Discussion is particularly valuable for checking on pupils' understanding of the purpose and nature of the tasks in which they are engaged. It can also help us to gauge the reactions of individuals to the work they have been asked to do.

Various forms of structured discussion activities can be helpful in encouraging children to think aloud and reflect upon their own learning. One useful approach is to get children to talk in pairs, where each child has to listen for two minutes as their partner talks about what they have been doing during the day. Listening, it is explained, has to be undertaken in an active way. This means listening carefully, trying to understand what is said, and only asking a question if what is said is unclear. By this approach of active listening each pupil helps the other to give a clearer account of what they think and feel about their classroom tasks and activities.

Written notes

Inevitably in a busy classroom, with a relatively large class, there will be some need to keep written records. Again, this may be done in a relatively informal, unstructured way, or it might be based upon some form of agreed schedule. Generally teachers' capacity to record lots of detailed written information is limited. Nevertheless, most teachers like to keep informal notes or brief diaries of things that happen and ideas that emerge that they wish to pursue.

Bearing in mind the points made in other units, we also wish to encourage pupils to keep their own records. This is an important part of a general strategy for encouraging all children to take responsibility for their own learning. It can also provide insights into the way in which individual pupils perceive their work in school. There are, of course, difficulties that arise when asking children to keep records of their achievements and experiences. First of all there is the question of time. If children are to spend time recording what they have been doing, when should this happen? In addition, many children may lack the necessary reading and writing skills to record for themselves. All we can say is that, in schools where children are introduced to self-recording at an early stage in their school careers, these problems seem to be largely overcome. Time is found because staff feel that the process of self-recording is a worthwhile feature of the learning experience provided for the children. Similarly their commitment to this idea means that they find ways of helping children to overcome difficulties of written communication. These may involve the use of drawings, paired or small group recording, or schedules of various kinds.

It is likely that a school's policy for monitoring pupil progress will include the use of various forms of anecdotal report, whether to summarize work completed, report on social development or describe specific events that have occurred and are felt to be significant. Where such records are to be retained for future use it is particularly important that care should be taken in the wording used. It is likely, for example, that descriptions will include both explicit and implicit characteristics. Where this is so the reader should be guided in recognizing what has actually been observed and what has been interpreted by the teacher writing the report.

Let us consider an example to illustrate the issue. Here is an extract from a report written by a primary school teacher:

'I am still very concerned about Adil's progress. He really does not seem to care about his work. He spends a lot of time dreaming or interfering with other children.

in the last two weeks he has only completed two work cards and virtually nothing in his number work. He hates reading although I did see him spending a lot of time in the book corner the other day looking at a book about railways...'

What do we really know from this report? The teacher makes a number of statements that are a matter of judgement and, in some cases, are liable to misinterpretation. How does she know that he does not care about his work? What does she mean by 'dreaming' or, even worse, 'interfering with other children'? Does he stop them from doing their work or is his interfering of a much more serious nature? She feels that he hates reading and yet her specific observation suggests that Adil does look at some books.

Our advice is that, where anecdotal comment is part of records to be passed on to other people, it should focus on recording what occurs and interpretations should be avoided as far as possible.

Schedules of checklists

One way of structuring oral or written recording is to base it on some form of schedule or checklist that provides headings against which progress can be reviewed. This can help to reduce the time necessary for recording but creates anxiety for some teachers since the introduction of structures may become restricting. Some recording schedules are provided by commercial schemes, but on the whole it is wiser for teachers within a school to devise their own. This helps to ensure that what is recorded reflects the curriculum aspirations of the school as a whole.

The style as well as the content of recording schedules can vary. In some cases they may take the form of rather broad, general subheadings against which qualitative comments are noted; they may consist of questions to be addressed; or they can be based on lists of statements that are ticked or dated as children are seen to achieve particular learning stages.

The following example is part of a curriculum that has been modified into a series of steps that will help with planning and assessment. Objectives are broken down into sub-skills and suggestions made as to how these might be assessed. For example: General objective—the ability to communicate findings through an appropriate medium.

What to look for:

- able to tell another child about his/her work
- writes a clear account of his/her work
- can draw a simple map
- tries other methods to communicate findings: (e.g. poems, graphs, pictures, music)
- varies his/her communication according to the projected audience.

Where a group of teachers chooses to develop its own schedules for monitoring progress, the following guidelines may be useful in determining appropriate items for inclusion:

1 *Items should be stated as far as possible in terms of observable behaviour*

To aid observation it is better to use precise statements of actions that can be observed.

2 *Items should describe only one behaviour*

For example, an item that states 'plays and works well' describes two distinct behaviours. If it is necessary to observe both, then they should appear as separate items.

3 *Items should be set at an appropriate level*

When writing items it is important to consider the following aspects of generality:

- items should relate to the general aims and objectives of the school curriculum
- they should take into account the age of the pupils to be assessed
- they should not be so general as to be meaningless or so specific as to be trite
- they should describe behaviours that can realistically be achieved. For example, to have an item that states 'understands others' is unrealistic.

Tests

Any review of information-gathering techniques cannot exclude reference to testing. Testing is a matter of considerable confusion in many schools, and examples of poor practice are not difficult to find.

We wish to point to the importance of informal approaches to testing pupil achievement. Too often, teachers discount the value of the information they gather through asking children to carry out classroom tasks in order to see how well they are progressing. Written assignments, short end of the week exercises, questioning and quizzes are all well-established strategies for reviewing what children have learned. They represent the most 'natural' forms of assessment since they are carried out as part of the normal encounters that occur in classrooms. They also have the important benefit of being directly related to the curriculum that is on offer.

Once again, of course, there are problems, and the greatest of these is probably that of time. How does a busy teacher organize the class in ways that allow time for testing the progress of individual children on a regular basis? There is no easy answer to this age-old problem, but as we examine the work of effective teachers in other units we will see that one of the things they seem to do well is to organize tasks, resources and people in ways that encourage pupils to be more independent.

This can have the effect of buying time that can be used to carry out more systematic forms of assessment with individual or small groups of pupils.

If you are planning to give children some form of test, formal or informal, ask yourself what it is you are trying to do as a result. Clearly different purposes may well call for different types of measure.

Until recently, education has been dominated by the use of tests that compare pupils with one another (e.g. intelligence tests, many reading tests) but tell you little or nothing about the precise skills or subject matter any pupil has mastered. These are called norm-referenced tests. The main features of such tests are that they:

- compare people with each other;
- are useful in selecting relatively high and low performing members of a group;
- are not curriculum specific;
- can only be used occasionally (e.g. once a term or year);
- can only be obtained commercially.

More recently, attention has tended to focus on another approach involving the use of what are called criterion-referenced tests. These tests are concerned with the child's performance related to specific targets within the curriculum. The main features of this approach are that it:

- compares a person's performance with some required standard;
- is intended to help in planning instruction for individual pupils;
- attempts to test what has been taught and therefore relates directly to the curriculum;
- can be used for monitoring progress on a regular basis (daily if necessary);
- can be obtained commercially or designed by teachers.

Clearly, teachers need to understand the difference between these two approaches to testing and of course, when each should be used.

Consider some examples of statements made as a result of children being tested:

John's reading age on the test is 6.9.
Mary's score is second from the top.
David's score is average.
George has a WISC Performance IQ of 80.

These statements are examples of the use of various types of norm-referenced tests. The progress of these pupils has been assessed in relation to the performance of other children on the same tasks. The teacher can see how each pupil ranks in relation to others but has no specific feedback on the extent to which each has met, or failed to meet, the objectives of instruction.

Now contrast the preceding statements with the following:

Ted can add all combinations of single-digit whole numbers from 1 to 9 without error.

Helen can spell 90 per cent of the words from the second word list.

Betty can swim two lengths of the pool using backstroke.

These statements are the result of the use of criterion-referenced approaches to testing. The pupil's performance is described without reference to the performance of other children. The information is useful in planning the tasks that should be provided for the individual child.

It must be stressed at this point that the issue is not that one approach is good and the other is bad; it is understanding when and how to use each. If your purpose is to select the top or bottom few pupils, and identify the average, or to survey the relative attainment of pupils in terms of generally accepted skill and knowledge outcomes, use a norm-referenced test. Consider carefully the types of test items included to ensure that they assess the areas with which you are concerned. It is also important to know the manner in which the standardization of the test was carried out. It may be useful to seek advice at this stage to ensure that you make an appropriate decision. If, on the other hand, your purpose is to assess what specific content and curriculum objectives have been attained with a view to making decisions about the types of work that should now be set for an individual child, use criterion-referenced approaches. These can take different forms. For example:

- Curriculum-related assessment strategies may be incorporated into schemes devised within a school by groups of teachers.
- Some commercially available criterion-referenced tests are now available. Where these are used it is vital that their content should be matched to the school's curriculum content.
- Some curriculum packages have mastery tests built in to assist in placement and progress monitoring.

Audio-visual recording

One other possible form of information gathering that can be valuable is the use of audio-visual recording. Unlike the other methods already discussed, however, this involves the introduction of equipment that may be disruptive. Nevertheless, audio recordings, video or photographs can be helpful in presenting snapshots of classroom life that can then be used by pupils and teachers to reflect upon and analyse what was happening. In particular they can be valuable in:

- allowing groups to discuss the experience of working together on a project or taking part in some problem-solving task;
- helping teachers to examine what they do from a fresh perspective;

- encouraging pupils to reflect upon their own behaviour;
- allowing teachers to examine the behaviour of pupils, particularly in relation to teacher actions;
- providing a means of examining discrepancies between observed and desired performance.

Review

Information concerning classroom events and activities should be analysed and reviewed by all those involved. This process should be collaborative; it should involve teacher and pupils. In other words we should ask pupils for their opinions about their work, rather than relying on our interpretations of their reactions. Sharing perceptions in this way is vital because they are frequently different.

What are the important features of classrooms where this idea of reflection is emphasized? Most obviously there is a lot of discussion between pupils and teacher, and between pupils and pupils, about the work being undertaken in class. Central to the ethos created in the classroom is the powerful message that the point of view of every individual is valued.

This approach to reviewing classroom activities depends more on an appropriate attitude than high-powered technique. In other words, pupils should be encouraged to formulate and articulate their own views, even though they may not always be positive. This requires openness, and an acceptance of criticism, on our part. Providing an opportunity to express their views is often sufficient for some pupils; others may need considerable support and encouragement. Questions should be open-ended, assumptions should be challenged, and pupils should be encouraged to justify their opinions.

Creating such an ethos may take time, particularly with pupils who are not accustomed to their views being sought and apparently valued. In this situation, a useful procedure is to set time aside for the formulation of questions. So, for example, the teacher may spend some time introducing a topic, and then ask pupils to work in pairs or small groups with the specific task of identifying issues for further discussion and attention.

In general, strategies that require pupils to consider the significance of what they are doing are an essential feature of effective classroom assessment. This can take many forms. In one primary school, children are encouraged to talk to one another at various points during the day about what they have been doing, what they have achieved and how they feel. By the time they get to the age of 11 many of them have developed a sophisticated view of themselves as learners and are well able to describe their own strengths and weaknesses, preferences and interests in considerable detail.

The process of reflecting on learning may also be carried out in written form. For example, some teachers like to write comments and messages to pupils in reply to their creative writing. These are intended to create a dialogue rather than the more traditional approach of making qualitative judgements. Thus they may lead to an interchange of ideas between teacher and pupil in which they share quite private and personal thoughts with one another. For teenagers, in particular, this may encourage a form of expression with which they might otherwise feel uncomfortable. Once again, this approach reinforces the point that the teacher values the pupil's opinion.

Another strategy used very effectively with pupils of different ages involves keeping a 'learning journal'. This is a diary, a personal document which the pupil may or may not wish to share with friends or the teacher. Essentially, the idea is to encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Time is allocated during the day for making entries, which must relate to aspects of classroom work. One teacher provided the following subheadings as guidelines for her pupils.

- Ideas that you would like to remember
- Questions that you need to think about
- Leads to follow up
- Points to share with your friends
- Reactions to your lessons

In addition to pupils reflecting on their activities and experiences we are also keen to encourage teachers to take a reflective view of their own work. This may well be facilitated by interchange with pupils in some of the ways we have described. It is also important, however, that time is found to talk with colleagues about matters of common concern. Where this works well it can be one of the most enriching aspects of various types of collaborative teaching. Planning classroom activities together, sharing in their implementation, and reviewing the outcomes can be a tremendous source of professional development. Indeed, experience indicates that a feature of successful schools is an emphasis on discussion of teaching and learning.

Action

Gathering and reviewing assessment information is pointless if it does not lead to some form of action. This is where the need for flexibility is so vital, and the demands on the teacher can be so great.

We are assuming that, having set out with a plan of action for a lesson or series of lessons, we are prepared to review and modify this in the light of how it goes in the classroom. So, decisions that were made beforehand can be changed or modified as a consequence of what happens in the classroom and how people feel as activities develop. Objectives may be changed, tasks and activities modified, and classrooms reorganized as part of a continuous process of classroom assessment.

Finding out

You are concerned about a pupil who is experiencing difficulties in learning. What do you need to know in order to help? Below is a list of types of information. Number them in terms of their importance. Add any additions in the spaces provided.

	Home background
	IQ score
	Medical details
	Existing skills/knowledge
	Comments from previous teacher
	Comments from parents
	Pupil's own comments
	School reports/records
	Examples of work
	Reading test results
	Classroom observations

Unit 3.2

Making learning more meaningful

Unit aim

To give participants the opportunity to practice planning meaningful and enjoyable activities in the subject area of their choice.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Strategies for making learning more meaningful and enjoyable'
2. Team up with a participant who is of your speciality (i.e. a class teacher or a subject teacher) and who teaches the same grade as you or as close to your level as possible.
3. Together decide on a topic from the subject matter of your choice.
4. Based on the strategies suggested in the discussion material, develop activities for as many of the strategies as possible.
5. Implement these activities in one or both of your classes.
6. Evaluate the implementation together.
7. Share your findings with the rest of the participants.

Evaluation issues

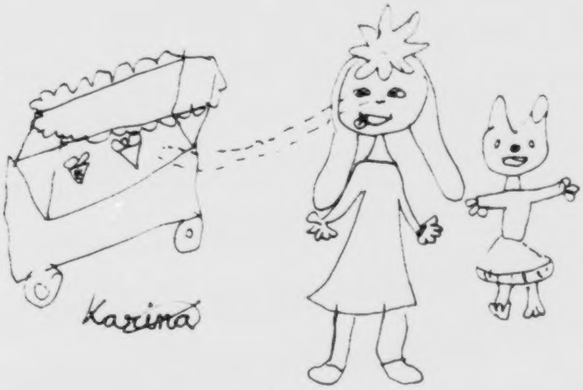
1. What have you gained from this activity?
2. Are there any of these strategies that you have not been using? If so, will you start including them in planning your lessons?

Strategies for making learning more meaningful and enjoyable

When planning any lesson or activity, a teacher has to consider many teaching strategies so that the teaching will be effective and the learning successful. One aspect of teaching that has to be taken into consideration is how to plan activities and lessons that are meaningful for the students, so that they understand the purpose of what they are doing. When this is done, not only will students be more motivated to learn, but will also enjoy the learning process even more.

Below seven strategies are described that can help a teacher plan lessons/activities that are meaningful. With each strategy a few examples are provided. It is noteworthy to mention that:

1. These strategies are not the only ones to be used when planning lessons but are to be incorporated into the lesson alongside strategies that may not seem meaningful for students but are necessary such as drill, memorizing facts, etc.
2. Not all the strategies have to be used every time a new lesson is planned for, but as many as possible.
3. The strategies mentioned below can be used across all subjects taught at school such as mathematics, science, social studies, reading, etc. It is more important to use them in those areas which seem unrelated to the student's life or are more abstract.



The seven suggested strategies are:

1 *Building new lessons on the previous knowledge of students*

Every student, no matter how little she/he knows, has gained some information about any given topic either from daily experience or from previous learning at school. It is necessary for a teacher to give students an opportunity to show what they know so that they make significant contributions to the lesson and be more active. It also gives the teacher a good idea of the level of the students. This can be done by:

- Brainstorming with the students on a specific topic and letting them relate what they know. For example:

In a science lesson on the classification of animals, students can name as many animals as they can as the teacher writes them on the board. Later, students can tell what they know about the animals and what they have in common and the teacher will build on from there.

A geometry lesson on triangles can be started off by the students recalling and writing down all what they learned till then about triangles. The teacher will use the information they gathered as the basis for the new lesson.

- Problem solving

Given a problem, the student has to use whatever he already knows to solve it. After this is done, the teacher will introduce the new concept or skill needed to solve the problem at hand. This procedure will make the student more curious and clarify the purpose for learning the new concept and skill. For example:

To introduce division, the teacher can ask the students to give out equally 15 storybooks to three students. After each student has come up with a solution, the teacher then introduces the operation of division as a more efficient way to solve the problem.

In a lesson on the environment, the teacher can pose a question such as 'What measures can be taken to reduce toxic waste from the industries located in their city/country?' The teacher can later introduce other measures that could be used.

- Sharing with another student

Before tackling a new topic, the student is asked to jot down his knowledge, thoughts and/or feelings about the topic and then through active listening share it with another student. This can be easily done with most reading lessons before the students read the text and with many science or social science topics.

- Detailed observation by the teacher of the students through their in-class work, answers and participation.

2 *Using the student's daily experiences*

In teaching a new concept, the teacher must include examples from the students' daily experiences to clarify the concept. This will bring out the relevancy of what the students are being taught. For example:

In teaching capacity, the teacher can ask the students to bring a variety of beverage containers to class and later the students can compare the amounts of the various containers.

In a lesson on conductivity of heat, students can relate from their home experience what materials they can feel or not feel heat from.

3 *Making learning functional*

One way of making learning more meaningful and purposeful is by giving the student a chance to apply what he is learning in his everyday life. When a student is able to use it practically, the student will remember it better and be more interested to learn it. For example:

In history, when studying the laws set by Hammurabi, students can be given examples of cases that need to be judged. Students will judge each case according to the first set of laws and to their present system of laws and then decide which law is preferable in each case. When studying percentages, students can be asked to bring labels from items of clothing. The students can then use their existing knowledge to understand the composition of the material of the clothing and what percentages of natural and artificial fibres are used.

When the student sees the purpose of learning a new topic, she will be able to put up with what seems to her as more difficult and less meaningful tasks. For instance:

Students will cope with the fractions one half, a third, a quarter and a tenth as they can be easily related to real life situations. Working with these fractions first will pave the way for the more tedious fractions such as a seventh, a ninth and a thirteenth.

It is important to note that when situations or examples are being made up for the purpose of being functional, they should be as realistic as possible. For example:

A contractor needs to make the foundation for a building. He offered a labourer the job for either 20 J.D. and 0.3 J.D. for every hour or 0.7 J.D. for each hour. What are the number of hours required to make the second offer more advantageous for the labourer? (This is taken from the ninth grade maths book!).

A labourer looking for work found two jobs, one paying 20 J.D. per week plus 0.3 J.D. for every hour of work, the second paying 0.7 J.D. for each hour. If he is to work for eight hours a day, which job will be financially more rewarding?

4 *Raising interest in the content by using stories*

Stories of any kind raise the interest of children of all ages. Many stories are available for the various topics that students are exposed to. Stories like the apple falling on Newton's head or Archimedes' 'Eureka! Eureka!', or stories about explorers of different geographical sites, raise the curiosity of the students to know more about the subject.

In every subject area that is taught, many stories are available if one takes the time to look them up from various resources. It makes it more fun and interesting not only for the students but for the teacher as well.

5 *Relating learning to other subjects*

We teach different subject matters as if they are completely independent one from the other. However, they are often interrelated and interdependent. In order that the student does not acquire a compartmentalized idea of knowledge, the teacher has to bring out as often as possible how new learning is related to other areas of learning. For example:

The concept of co-ordinates in maths is used for locating a point on a plane and similarly latitudes and longitudes are used in geography to locate a specific place on a map.

Graphs are not only used in maths but also in science, social studies and in many aspects of life.

Geometrical shapes can be applied in art to make decorations and patterns. Their use as a basis of certain art forms can also be brought up.

The study of discoveries in science can be made more interesting when their influence on historical developments is shown, such as the effect of the discovery of steam on the industrial revolution.

Maths and science concepts can be easily brought up when the class participates in making any type of food: measurements of quantities for recipes, nutritional value of the ingredients, and the amount of calories in the food.

The study of light in science can be related to the study of colours in art.

6 *Field trips and projects*

There are hundreds of examples of how field trips and projects can be incorporated into the curriculum. They should be included on a regular basis throughout the year. Field trips not only are fun for the students but, if planned appropriately, can be used to show applications of what the students are learning in real life situations. Projects are interesting for students especially that they give them the opportunity to apply what they have learned.

7 *Games*

Many resources are available that include both ideas for games and how to make games that apply learning in fun ways for the classroom. The more experience teachers have in using games, the more apt they become at making up their own games. Making games available and using them as rewards can be an incentive for students to finish their work in class quickly and accurately.

Unit 3.3

Changing practice

Unit aim

To consider issues involved in changing practice.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material, 'Handling Change Successfully'.

2 Write some notes about a process of change that you have experienced. Try to answer the following questions:

- who proposed the change?
- what was the intention?
- what actually happened?

3 In groups of five or six listen to the accounts from each member. Then prepare a group report listing advice you would make to teachers wishing to change or develop some aspect of their practice.

4 Report the advice to the rest of the course.

Evaluation issues

1 What have you learned from this activity?

2 What steps do you need to take in order to support the development of your own practice?

Handling changes successfully

It may have come as a surprise to some readers to find that our concern with special needs is focused as much on teachers as on pupils. Yet it seems obvious that the morale and skills of teachers must have a significant bearing on the learning of children. In the traditional approach to special needs, however, the assumption was that problems belonged to pupils and this led to a rather narrow focus that did not include consideration of the needs of teachers. In seeking ways of helping teachers to learn how to improve their practice, we assume that meeting teachers' individual needs will, in turn, help them to become more effective in meeting the individual needs of their pupils.

Some teachers are more aware of the importance of their own professional development than others. They approach their work with a questioning frame of mind, seeking to explore new possibilities and find ways of teaching that will be an improvement on their current practice. Equally, some schools are better than others at creating an atmosphere for professional development.

In considering ways of developing practice, therefore, the existing attitudes of individuals and the pervading atmosphere within a school are important factors. In this discussion material we examine these issues in some detail in order to help you understand more about what is involved in personal change and, as well, the implications of attempting innovation in collaboration with colleagues. To do this we will be drawing on our own experience in order to explain something of the nature of change in education, the conditions that appear to deter and facilitate it, and some strategies that you may find useful.

The nature of change

In order to better understand the nature of change it is helpful to reflect on your own experience. Think about some attempt to introduce a new way of working into your classroom. How did it go? Did it work? How long did it take? Were there some aspects that were more successful than others? Then think about your response to a change suggested (or imposed) by somebody else. How did that go? How did you react? How did you feel?

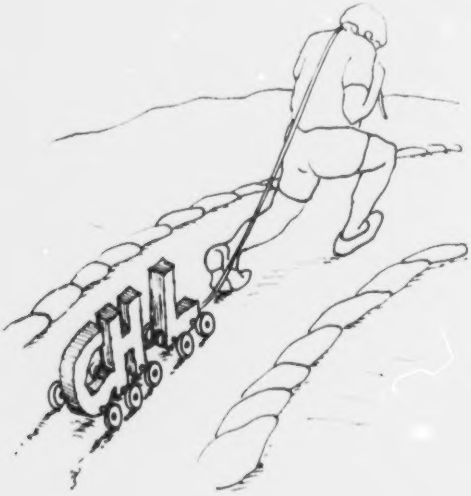
As we reflect on our experience of attempts to introduce new ideas or ways of working into schools, a number of thoughts come to mind:

- change is really about learning
- change is a process not an event
- change takes time
- change can be confusing
- change can hurt

Let us consider these points in some detail:

Change is really about learning

Change is essentially about learning new ways of thinking and behaving. If you accept that argument, it opens up a very helpful avenue of enquiry. It suggests that in seeking to understand how to handle change, alone or with colleagues, we can get some useful ideas from considering what we already know about learning. What are the circumstances that help people to learn? Whatever they are, and we will be considering them in some detail later, they are likely to be helpful in schools when teachers are attempting to improve their practice.

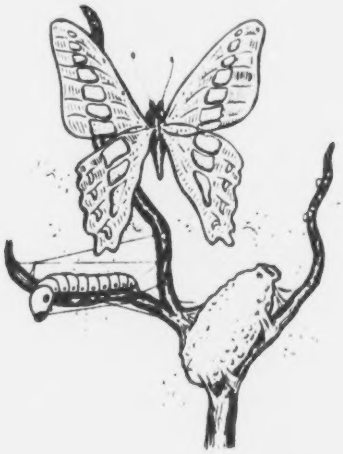


Accepting that change is really about learning has a further significant implication. It means that schools should be places where teachers learn from experience in the same way as they intend that their pupils should learn from the tasks and activities in which they are engaged. Indeed, we would go further and suggest that teachers who regard themselves as learners in the classroom are likely to be more successful in facilitating the learning of their pupils. The sensitivity they acquire as a result of reflecting upon their own attempts to learn new ideas or new ways of working is influential in terms of the way they deal with the children in their classes. So, as you consider areas of teaching that you may wish to develop, or new approaches that you may like to try, remember that you are also a learner. Seek to provide yourself with the conditions for success in learning that you aim to provide for your pupils and not only will you be a more successful teacher but you will find that you can derive great personal satisfaction from the process. Furthermore, if you are enthusiastic and motivated this will communicate itself to your pupils.

Discussion material

Change is a process not an event

If we are talking about the introduction of significant changes, involving the adoption of new ways of thinking and different ways of operating in the classroom, it is important to recognize that this is usually a process rather than an event. Fundamental ideas do not change at a moment in time, nor are new approaches implemented at the blinking of an eye. What happens is that a sequence of changes or operations is undergone.



Once again, it can be helpful to reflect on a change in which you have taken part. No doubt you can recall particular events, perhaps an introductory meeting to discuss what was to happen, or your first attempt to use some new materials in the class. In order to fully understand the nature of the new approach and to become proficient in its use, however, you are likely to have gone through a period of trial and error, possible confusion, difficulty and occasional elation. Gradually, if the change is successful, the process leads to feelings of greater confidence and personal acceptance. In time the practice and its principles eventually become your own, linked to, and integrated with, other aspects of your thinking and practice.

Change takes time

Accepting that significant changes in teaching occur as a process takes us on to the next point. Because it is a process, change takes place over time. Consequently, in attempting to handle change successfully we need to be aware of the importance of time, particularly in terms of:

- the need for time to be available to learn about new ideas and practise new skills
- the need to recognize that the process of personalizing new ways of working will take time.

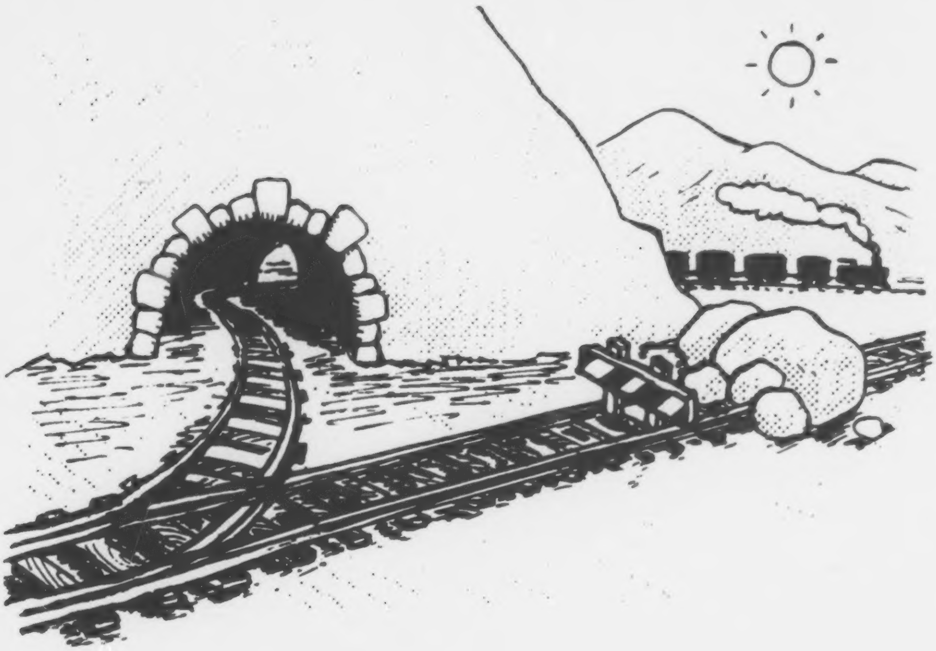
Too often in schools teachers are expected to make change overnight. 'As from Monday we will start using the new maths scheme' or 'In September classes will be of mixed ages'. The pressure of unrealistic time scales can create stress, anxiety and negative reactions to what is proposed. It can also mean that little or no opportunity exists to learn more about how to implement the proposed innovation.

Evidence from social psychologists suggests that for complex organizations, such as schools, fully to adopt a new way of working can take from three to five years. Yet so often in schools the time scale for the introduction of innovations is much shorter. We also tend to make things worse by requiring teachers to deal with a number of new initiatives at the same time.

Change can be confusing

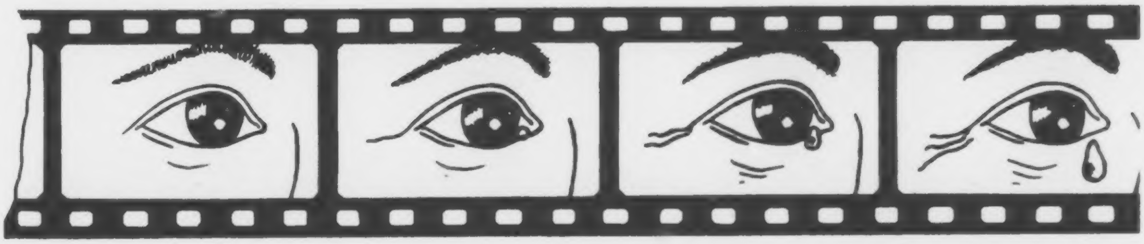
Textbooks about management in schools sometimes give the impression that change is a rational business, a series of boxes to be followed along a logical flowchart. Establish what you want to do, how you are going to do it, and so on. It all sounds rather appealing and, indeed, some form of framework for planning can be helpful.

What we must not lose sight of, however, is the realization that the time-consuming process of learning that we call change is, in practice, often confusing. As individuals seek to relate new ideas and ways of working to their own unique range of personal experiences, preferences and prejudices, they can become distorted, adapted or, indeed, totally converted into a form that is more acceptable. Consequently the original purpose, despite having been presented in a logical and rational form, may come to mean something quite different as a result of its adoption by other people.



Change can hurt

The final point we wish to make in our account of the nature of change in schools is to do with its effects on people. Human beings in general prefer to stay as they are. Making changes requires risk taking, so why bother if it can be avoided; it is so much safer to stay as you are. Also if you adopt something new then you often have to reject something else, and this can be painful. Asking people to alter their ideas, possibly requiring them to reject aspects of their past practice, has the potential to cause considerable damage.



Barriers to change

What then are the things that can get in the way as teachers attempt to learn new ideas and introduce new ways of working? Our experience suggests that a number of factors that can be barriers to change commonly occur. These are:

- lack of understanding
- lack of necessary skills
- existing attitudes
- limited resources
- inappropriate organization

Lack of understanding

In order to adopt a new way of working it is necessary to have a reasonable understanding of what it involves, what is the purpose and why it is as it is. Without such an understanding, commitment is likely to be limited and attempts are going to be at best tentative and, more frequently, flawed. Teachers have a capacity to pretend that they are doing something when, in fact, they are not. Furthermore, it takes a certain amount of professional courage to admit before your colleagues that you don't really understand. So, for example, the deputy head explains a proposal at a staff meeting. This is what I am suggesting, this is why, and so on. Does everybody understand? Is everybody clear? At this point some teachers may find it difficult to express their concerns or explain their lack of understanding. As a result the initiative proceeds with some colleagues, at least, far from clear about what it really entails. Those in a school who are leading or co-ordinating developments may, as a result of their own enthusiasm, inadvertently make this problem of lack of understanding worse. If they have spent a lot of time thinking about, planning and trying out a new idea themselves and wish to share it with their colleagues, they may impose a schedule that allows little opportunity for understanding to occur. Their enthusiasm and commitment may lead them to be insensitive to the needs of their colleagues as learners.

Lack of necessary skills

It may be, of course, that you understand what needs to change but feel that you do not have the competence to carry it out. Indeed, your feelings may be correct - you may not have the necessary skills.

Once again, the enthusiasm and commitment of others can cause difficulties and possible stress. It may be very uncomfortable for you to feel that some of your colleagues are able to do things that you know are beyond your current competence. This discomfort will be made worse if, in their desire to get on, they commit themselves (and you) to a time scale for implementation that allows no opportunity for you to develop your skills.

This is a particular problem in schools where there is no tradition of talking about techniques of teaching and no facility for teachers to work collaboratively as they attempt to introduce new ways of working. Regrettably it is the case that many teachers go through their careers without having opportunities to observe how others organize things in their classrooms. Their models of teaching evolved from their own experience as pupils at school and as a result of their own trial-and-error efforts over the years. Whilst we would not wish to underestimate the value of learning by trial and error (indeed part of our rationale is to encourage teachers to learn from their own experience), we also know how much can be learned by watching others teaching and working collaboratively alongside colleagues.

Existing attitudes

We also have to recognize that sometimes the most significant barriers to improvement are those that are erected in our own minds. Sometimes, on courses, we ask people to fill in blocks on a drawing of a stone wall that appear to be interfering with progress towards their professional goals. Often people have extensive lists of reasons outside of themselves, particularly reasons that relate to the attitudes and behaviour of their colleagues. We press them to consider what obstacles they create as a result of their own attitudes and behaviour and this quite often leads people to recognize some blocks in the wall that can be removed.

Having said that, it is clear that education takes place within a complex social environment and that other people do intrude as we attempt to develop our work as teachers. A common mistake in this respect is to personalize difficulties, suggesting that some individual (or group of individuals) is the resister who is preventing change. We urge that you avoid the temptation to adopt this view. Once somebody is seen as 'the problem' it becomes very difficult to enrol their support and involvement. It is likely that your attitude to them will become apparent, perhaps through your use of language or mode of expression towards them. As a result, their negative view of what is proposed will become reinforced and the chances of a change of mind become even less.

It is better to view colleagues who are resisting what is being proposed as serving an appropriate professional role in examining and questioning its value. Indeed, given that education has been somewhat subject to bandwagon ideas, it is important that teachers all show some willingness to resist. This being the case, the colleague who is expressing reservations can be seen as helping others to understand and evaluate what is proposed. This also has the added tactical advantage that everybody involved, including those who are sceptical, retains the right to adjust their views; this is particularly important since there are few absolute truths in education.

Limited resources

At a more practical level, attempts to innovate can easily be frustrated if the necessary resources are unavailable. This can take a variety of forms.

It may, for example, be that the introduction of some new scheme is inhibited because there are not enough copies of the materials available. If teachers have to continually send children searching around the school for the resources box or a set of books, they may eventually come to the view that it is easier to use something else.

Lack of resources may also have to do with human resources. As we have seen, change often requires time to try out new ideas and discuss their use with colleagues. When a teacher has a full timetable this may become something of a deterrent.

Inappropriate organization

Related to the use of resources is the issue of organization. Sometimes when a proposal gets into difficulty it is because the overall organization of the school, or the organizational pattern within particular classes, prevents the new way of working from being implemented.

For example, the staff in a primary school wanted to try the idea of an integrated day as a means of increasing flexibility within classes for meeting children's individual needs. The idea was that children should have greater choice over the activities in which they took part and that pupils would be involved in a variety of different activities in various parts of the room. The organizational problem was that three teachers were absolutely committed to the idea that each child should have his or her own seat. They felt that 'having a place' in the classroom was a source of security for the children. Unfortunately, this meant that the need for thirty or so chairs and table spaces in these classrooms militated against the idea of a more flexible form of organization.

This list of five possible barriers to change is potentially rather depressing. Thinking about it leaves us wondering if change is actually possible given the complexities and pressures of day-to-day life in schools. Yet clearly it is possible, particularly as each of these barriers can be avoided. Indeed, recognizing their existence is the first stage in a strategy for avoiding them.

As we move on to consider ways of facilitating professional development, encouraging teachers to see themselves as learners alongside their pupils, we want you to keep in mind the points we have made about the nature of change in schools and to look for ways of avoiding the difficulties that can occur.

Conditions for successful change

In this section we consider some general factors that seem to be helpful to teachers as they attempt to develop their practice and adopt new ways of working. Together they are factors that lead to an atmosphere that is conducive to change. They are:

- clarity of purpose
- realistic goals
- motivation
- support
- resources
- evaluation

Clarity of purpose

As we have seen, an understanding of what is intended by a proposed change is essential to its successful implementation. It is important to note that a proposal can mean different things to different people. Reality is something that each of us constructs in our minds as a result of our previous experience. Consequently when we talk about finding ways of helping colleagues to understand the purpose and nature of what is intended we must accept that this may change as a result of the process of discussion and collaboration. The important feature is that time should be found to allow individuals to gain a sense of personal meaning about what is to happen, in order that they can become comfortable with, and committed to, what is proposed.

Realistic goals

Given the existence of an agreed purpose, the next stage must be to formulate some plan to make it happen. Once again, time becomes a critical issue and it is important that realistic priorities are set, taking into account other demands and the need to allow people space and opportunity to learn any new skills that may be necessary in order to implement what is being proposed. It makes sense, therefore, to set goals - for example, 'This is what we will try to achieve by the Summer'. These provide a common sense of purpose and should help to encourage participation, particularly if the goals can be achieved.

Motivation

In order to encourage involvement and effort there has to be a desire to change that is the result of either internal or external pressures. Pressure can take many forms, and if it is inappropriate or excessive may have a negative effect on attitudes. Often the most beneficial type of pressure arises from the desire of individuals to improve their own professional competence (i.e. personal pressure) or from participation in some form of co-operative venture (i.e. peer pressure).

Support

It also helps to have a strong sense of support. Making changes in the way you teach requires you to take risks with your professional credibility. All the evidence suggests that most of us are more likely to take risks if we are with others who provide encouragement and help. At the implementation stage, in particular, it is helpful to have the advice and comments of respected and trusted colleagues. There is, therefore, a need to create an atmosphere of support within a school that encourages individual members of staff to try new ways of working.

Resources

An important management task is to ensure that the resources necessary for the introduction of what is proposed are available. Whether at a personal level or at a whole school level, it means establishing priorities and then seeing to it that decisions about the use of time, people's roles and the allocation of materials are made in order to enable these priorities to be achieved.

Evaluation

Finally it is important that the introduction of any new ways of working is carefully monitored. In particular we need to know:

Are we getting anywhere?
Could things be improved? If so, how?
How do the people involved feel?

In this sense, evaluation is not a set of scientific principles and complex procedures but simply an attitude of mind. It is about setting aside time (yes, more time) to reflect on what is happening, in order to make changes as necessary. It seems so straightforward when expressed in this common-sense way but frankly it is something that is often overlooked. In their enthusiasm to bring about improvements, headteachers in particular can set off towards their goals, allowing no opportunity for what is happening to be examined and improved in the light of experience.

Unit 3.4

Classroom factors

Unit aim

To consider classroom factors that influence children's learning.

Activities

1 Consider the 'Classroom strategies chart'. This was produced by a group of teachers who included the ways they use to help individual pupils learn in their classrooms. In the empty boxes you can add any other strategies that you find useful.

2 Put a star against the three strategies that you think are most useful to you. Remember, our concern is with strategies that help you respond to individuals in the class.

3 In groups compare your chart with others. Then choose one strategy as a group and work out a plan for using this strategy in the classroom. Try to make use of all the expertise in your working group.

4 Form new groups consisting of one member of each of the previous working groups. Each member presents the findings of his/her working group.

Evaluation issues

1 Has this activity helped you to pinpoint aspects of your teaching that could be improved or developed?

2 Did you find it useful to discuss classroom practice with other teachers?

Classroom strategies chart

Setting individual tasks		Talking to individuals
	Giving pupils choice	Praising children's effort
Getting to know parents	Varied materials	Small group work
	Listening to individuals	Recording progress

Unit 3.5

Analysing classroom practice

Unit aim

To examine in more detail classroom factors that facilitate children's learning.

Activities

1 On a sheet of paper describe briefly a lesson or activity that you thought successful. It might be a lesson you taught yourself or one that you have observed.

2 On separate sheets of paper write down the features of the lesson that seemed to make it successful (one item on each sheet).

3 In working groups consider the papers from a variety of course members together. Try to make sense of the information given. Produce a group report indicating what you have found out about successful teaching.

4 Share the group report with the rest of the course members.

Evaluation issues

1 Have you learned anything new about effective teaching?

2 Are there any aspects of your teaching you might wish to review?

SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Unit 3.6

Co-operative learning

Unit aim

To consider issues involved in the use of co-operative learning.

Activities

1 *Please* do not look at the discussion material before the session. This would spoil the fun.

2 Work in groups of three or four following the course leader's instructions to complete the prescribed tasks as follows:

Activity 1: I want to see who is best at counting shapes. You have two minutes. (Correct answer = 40).

Activity 2: Do not compete. You again have two minutes to count the shapes. If you get above 95 % correct you will be 'excellent'; 90-95 % correct, 'very good'. (Correct answer = 11).

Activity 3: I want you to count the shapes as a group. If your group is over 95 % correct it will be 'excellent'; if it is between 90-95 % correct it will be 'very good'. Any group member must be able to explain how the group arrived at its answer. (Correct answer = 19).

3 Discuss the experience of carrying out these tasks. What was significant? How did you feel? What did you learn?

4 Again in your group, consider the implications for teaching children in school.

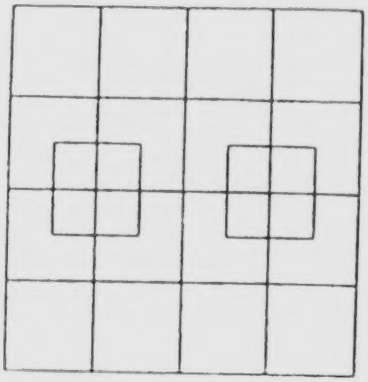
Evaluation issues

1 What was the most significant aspect of this activity for you?

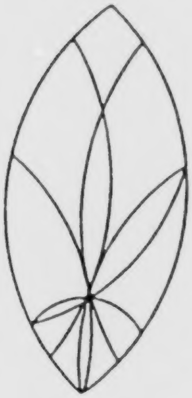
2 Could you make greater use of co-operative learning in your classroom?

Discussion material

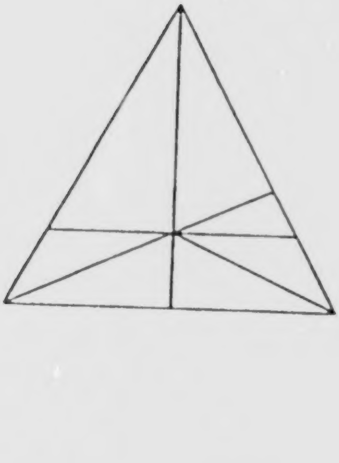
ACTIVITY 1



ACTIVITY 2



ACTIVITY 3



SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Unit 3.7

Structuring group activities

Unit aim

To consider how co-operative learning activities can be used in the classroom.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material 'Co-operative Learning Works'. Make some notes outlining the main messages from this text.

2 Bring to the course session some ideas for a lesson or activity that you would like to teach using co-operative approaches.

3 In small working groups plan each participant's lessons, taking note of the points raised in the discussion material.

4 Teach the lesson and write a short evaluation report keeping in mind the following headings:

- What did the pupils actually do?
- What were they learning?
- How worthwhile was it?
- What did I do?
- What did I learn?
- What do I intend to do now?

It would be helpful if a colleague could observe your lesson and help with the evaluation.

5 Report to the rest of the course the outcomes of your experiment.

Evaluation issues

1 What are your feelings about co-operative learning?

2 Do you intend to use these approaches in the future? If so, how can you develop this work?

Discussion material

Co-operative learning works

Traditionally, much of schooling has been seen as a competition designed to see which pupils can learn the most. It is as though learning is like climbing a ladder to success, the top of which can be reached only by a privileged few. This idea has been encouraged by writers in newspapers in some countries who appear to be convinced that competition in schools is a proven strategy for improving educational standards.

Some teachers encourage this view by the ways in which they grade performance and record progress. They set up activities which require their pupils to compete with one another in order to see who is best. Inevitably, however, where there are winners there have to be losers. The spelling test that ends with those pupils who did well holding up their hands reinforces the idea that school is like participating in a sporting event. It encourages pupils to work for themselves, taking no account of the performance of others except in the sense that they can be overtaken in the race to achieve educational success.

For some pupils this approach is undoubtedly highly motivating. They feel that they have a fair chance of success and are encouraged to do their best. Others learn over a period of time that their chances of success are minimal; they are always likely to be the losers. Consequently, they may elect to make less and less effort, or even to opt out. What schools teach them is that they are failures.

Remedial education

It was in response to this predominantly competitive ethos in many primary and secondary schools that the field of remedial education grew in many countries. Recognizing that some pupils were finding themselves regarded as failures, the case was made for some kind of positive discrimination. This has taken a number of different forms. Initially, the emphasis was on separate special classes or units with fewer pupils and a separate curriculum; more recently, the trend was towards withdrawal from ordinary lessons for short periods of intensive help in small groups; currently, the fashion is now moving towards in-class support where an additional teacher or classroom assistant provides additional help to those pupils perceived as experiencing difficulties in learning.

It is possible to identify two common strands in these responses. First, there is an emphasis on developing a close working relationship between adult and child, in the belief that this is an effective way of creating the trust and confidence that is necessary in order that special help can be provided. Secondly, attention is given to analysing curriculum tasks and materials in such a way as to provide an individual response matched to the existing attainments and interests of the pupil.

There is much to be commended in these two lines of approach. Few would dispute that learning is likely to be enhanced if there is good rapport between teacher and pupils, and careful attention to the match between pupils and tasks.

However, a number of areas of concern can result from an approach that places so much emphasis on making separate arrangements for particular pupils. It may mean that those who already have a low self-esteem have their confidence further damaged by being confirmed as 'having a problem'. In addition the provision of periods of additional help may necessitate withdrawal from certain curriculum experiences. It is not uncommon to find pupils withdrawn for intensive work on so-called basic skills from lessons that include the sorts of activities that give learning purpose and meaning.

There are also potential difficulties associated with devising individual learning programmes for some pupils. Here, the idea is to design activities and materials carefully graded to take account of individual pupils' existing skills and knowledge, which will enable them to progress at their own rate. However, the removal of the pressure that is intended to be provided by competition may leave pupils with no other incentive for making an effort. This is perhaps why, so often in the past, work with remedial classes or groups has tended to be characterised by an air of complacency. Both teachers and pupils have no real sense of purpose or accountability that would help to maintain momentum.

Another problem with the idea of individual programmes is that the emphasis that has been placed on planning around the needs of individual pupils has tended to lead to them spending long periods working in isolation. Consequently, they gain none of the academic or social benefits that can accrue from working collaboratively with their peers who have different aptitudes, interests and attitudes to learning.

Co-operative learning

The use of co-operative learning is a way of overcoming these areas of difficulty. As we will see there is a number of significant arguments for an increase in the use of co-operative learning strategies in schools. These apply to all pupils.

It is important to recognize that we are not arguing for the abolition of other forms of task setting. There are occasions when competitive and individualized approaches will be appropriate. Indeed, it is important that children have opportunities to take part in different types of learning experiences in order that they can become more sensitive to, and aware of, their own preferences. Schools should be places where, as well as learning about 'things', children also learn about themselves as learners. This will only happen if pupils experience a wide range of tasks and activities presented in a variety of ways and have opportunities to reflect upon and interpret these encounters.

What are the major arguments for a greater emphasis on tasks and activities being set in ways that require pupils to work co-operatively? In particular, how might this encourage success in the classroom?

Learning is about taking risks. It requires us to take steps into the dark, trying something out when we are unsure about the outcome. Many people find it easier to take risks when they have the confidence that is often provided by sharing decisions and experiences with other people. So, for example, many people find that they are more likely to make an expensive purchase if they are out shopping with friends than if they are on their own. If this is so, it surely makes sense for pupils to be given opportunities to take risks in the classroom in collaboration with classmates who can provide support and encouragement.

Readers may well agree that many of their most significant learning experiences have occurred when they have been engaged in some encounter which required discussion, argument or problem-solving with others. Whilst listening silently to a lecture or reading privately can be an effective way of gathering information, for most of us significant ideas and leaps towards greater understanding of complex material are much more likely to occur when we have opportunities to think aloud, bouncing our thoughts off other people.

The area of personal and social development is recognized as an important theme within the curriculum by most teachers. We want to help our pupils to become more accomplished in living, working and playing in social contexts because this is the nature of the world into which we want to be integrated. If much of school learning is carried out in a way that requires pupils to work in competition with one another or in isolation there is little opportunity for them to achieve objectives to do with these critical social areas. In classrooms where pupils are encouraged and helped to work co-operatively, however, they have opportunities to progress in these aspects of personal development whilst at the same time achieving their academic objectives.

On a more practical level, an emphasis on co-operative learning can help pupils to become less dependent on their teachers. Pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively, supporting one another and seeking solutions to the problems presented by their tasks and activities. Where this works reasonably well (and it is by no means easy to achieve) it can give teachers time to concentrate on more important aspects of classroom life. Working arrangements in many classrooms, on the other hand, encourage pupils to be dependent on the teacher. This has the effect of burning up that most valuable educational resource, teacher time. The issue is perhaps summed up by the suggestion that schooling is the only business where the boss does all the work whilst the workers sit and watch!

There is one final, rather specific argument for a greater use of co-operative approaches. It relates to the need to integrate exceptional individuals into a new school or class. For the purposes of this analysis, 'exceptional' could refer to any pupil who is new to the scene. This might be a pupil who has moved into the area, possibly from another country; a child whose parent is in the armed forces; or a child from a traveller family. All such children find themselves having to fit into a new social context at the same time as they are adjusting to the demands of a curriculum which may be different from that of their previous school.

Similar problems are faced by pupils who have spent a period in a special school or unit. Currently efforts are being made to find ways of educating pupils with disabilities in mainstream primary and secondary schools. The main arguments for this are:

1. Children must learn to live and work with all members of the community, whatever their disadvantages;
2. Children who have personal disadvantages or disabilities are entitled to participate in a broad and balanced range of educational experiences;
3. They should have the benefit of working and interacting with children who are perhaps more successful in learning.

It has to be said, however, that where such exceptional children become socially and intellectually isolated within mainstream classrooms, there are strong possibilities of negative outcomes resulting from their so-called integration. They may, for example, develop low self-esteem as a result of being stigmatised and stereotyped; learn to avoid challenging situations; suffer social rejection by other pupils; or be treated with paternalism. This being the case, we need to find ways of introducing them into a new class that encourage their success in both an academic and a social sense. We would suggest that a classroom in which there is a reasonable degree of co-operative working is more likely to help us achieve these goals.

In summary, then, the arguments that can be made for a greater emphasis on setting tasks and activities in such a way as to require co-operative learning include academic, social and organizational elements.

Discussion material

Practice

Given the strengths of the arguments for co-operative learning, it would be reasonable to assume that the use of such approaches would be widespread. What evidence there is, however, suggests that this is not the case.

In many primary schools, for example, there is an emphasis on the importance of discovery learning and problem-solving. Consequently it might be expected that teachers would make considerable use of approaches that require their pupils to work collaboratively on common tasks or activities. Evidence from research suggests that, whilst children are sometimes seated in groups in primary classrooms, they are rarely asked to work in a collaborative manner.

Certainly in the special needs field, whether in mainstream or special schools, the emphasis that has been placed on planning for individuals has, as we have already suggested, tended to encourage organizational patterns in which pupils are required to work alone.

Lack of staff development may be one important explanation why co-operative methods are not used to any great degree. It is probably true that very few of us have received any specific training in how to organize our classrooms in such a way as to facilitate effective group work. Consequently, we may lack the skills and confidence to try out ways of teaching that require us to take risks in front of that most critical of audiences, the class.

Here we must stress that, for co-operative methods of learning to be effective, they have to be planned, implemented and monitored very carefully. An ideological commitment to the idea is not enough and, indeed, can result in poorly conceived group activities which may quickly become a shambles. Whilst co-operative methods have an enormous potential for encouraging success in the classroom, this is unlikely to be the outcome unless they are in a systematic and co-ordinated way.

For those wishing to consider introducing or extending their use of such approaches it is perhaps helpful to start by identifying some of the possible areas of difficulty. The following list of issues provides a useful agenda for consideration:

- How do we prevent one or two pupils doing all the work?
- Why should pupils help each other to learn?
- Why should they care what their classmates are doing?
- How can we prevent the more successful pupils from belittling the contributions of others?
- How can low-attaining pupils make a significant contribution?
- How can group work be structured to facilitate the greatest possible learning for all members?
- What kinds of materials and activities can be used?

- How can we encourage colleagues to try co-operative methods?

Keeping these issues in mind we will now look at some of the essential features of co-operative learning.

Features of co-operative learning

Arguably, the most important aspect of co-operative working must be an acceptance amongst members of a group that they can achieve their own objectives only if other members achieve theirs. We can refer to this as positive interdependence, the idea that 'one cannot succeed without the others'.

Positive interdependence may be achieved in different ways depending upon the nature of the set tasks, the content to be covered and the previous experience of the pupils. Here are some examples:

1. Pupils may be required to work in pairs preparing a joint statement about a topic which they will be responsible for giving to a larger group.
2. A group may be involved in a task that can only be completed if separate materials that are held by individual members are pooled.
3. Individual members of a group may be assigned particular roles, e.g. chairperson, recorder, summarizer, reporter.
4. Each member may be asked to complete the first draft of a task that has to be completed by the whole group.
5. A group may be told that they will be scored or graded as a result of the aggregate performance of work completed by individual members.

It is important to recognize that asking pupils to work collaboratively involves presenting them with new challenges. Effectively we are introducing an additional set of objectives to be achieved. As well as trying to achieve their academic objectives, they are being required to bear in mind objectives related to the skills of working in a group. Consequently, this aspect of the curriculum has to be planned and monitored as carefully as any other. This means, therefore, that the complexity and demands of working collaboratively should be introduced carefully and increased in a gradual fashion. Initially the difficulties should be minimized by, for example, simply asking each pupil to work with one familiar classmate on a straightforward task. The nature of the task demands, and group size and complexity, can be increased gradually as the pupils grow in competence and confidence.

Where materials, particularly written materials of some kind, are to be used as part of group work, these must be carefully selected and presented. We also need strategies for helping pupils to use reading more effectively across the curriculum.

This approach is rooted in the view that reading should be seen as a strategy for learning. As such it involves decoding a text, making sense of what it is saying and relating this to the reader's existing understanding. By these processes judgements are made and knowledge is extended and modified. In other words, this is how learning takes places.

Pupils will need to learn how to work collaboratively to gain meaning from written materials. This involves pupils being taught particular strategies for analysing a text. So, for example, as part of a science or humanities lesson they might be asked to work with other pupils to:

1 Locate and identify particular information in the material. This may involve underlining parts of the text to indicate where particular information can be found.

2 Mark the located information in some way as an aid to understanding. Here sections of the text may be grouped into categories of particular significance.

3 Organize the information and present it in a different form, perhaps by making a list of items located in the text or by filling in information on some form of table or graph. Groups may also be asked to consider questions or issues that are not dealt with in the text or not dealt with adequately. This may well require them to think beyond the actual written material by considering questions such as, 'What might have happened if...?', or 'What would be the result of...?'

Other useful techniques involve some modifications of the texts to be used. For example:

1 Activities that involve the group in completing material that has words or sections deleted;

2 The presentation of a text cut up into separate sentences or paragraphs that the group have to put into sequence; or

3 Prediction of likely outcomes before going on to read the next page or section.

It is important to note that all these approaches rely on the teacher providing effective explanations and, possibly, demonstrations of what the processes involve before groups are asked to start work (see Unit 3.8 for more details).

It would be foolish to pretend that this type of approach to finding meaning in written material using group strategies solves the difficulties faced by those pupils who have limited reading skills. However, at the very least it can help them to participate in curriculum experiences from which they were previously excluded. As well, the experience of collaborating with more effective readers can be a means of helping them to recognize the potential usefulness and, indeed, enjoyment of reading.

Monitoring progress

The process of setting tasks and activities in ways that require pupils to co-operate needs to be monitored and reviewed carefully. Such monitoring should be carried out in relation to the two broad ranges of intended outcomes—those to do with academic progress and those concerned with the skills and attitudes necessary for working collaboratively with other pupils. The key issue is, are the pupils actively engaged in the tasks and activities that are set?

The two main strategies for monitoring classroom activity are observation and discussion. As the pupils are working, the teacher must move around the classroom collecting information through the use of questions and discussion. We need confirmation that all pupils understand what they are doing and why. And we need constantly to be checking that tasks and activities, and the objectives that underpin them, take adequate account of the existing skills and knowledge of each pupil.

Where necessary, further explanation may be given about the content of the activity or the working arrangements that have been agreed with the group. Attention should be paid to ensuring that specific guidelines for the group work are being applied and that individual members are contributing in the way that was intended. In particular, it is important to check that certain pupils are not dominating the proceedings and that others are not electing to opt out.

At the end of an activity or lesson the de-briefing of what has taken place is of crucial importance. This aspect of teaching is often poorly managed and sometimes completely ignored. If we think about the varied range of topics and experiences that pupils meet in a typical school day, we realize that it is essential that ways be found of helping them to draw out and record those that are significant.

De-briefing is a process of reviewing learning within which pupils are asked to consider what they have learned, what went well and what they may wish to remember in the future. It can be conducted in many different ways. For example, the teacher may simply review the activity or lesson with the whole class. Or, the pupils may talk in pairs or small groups, using the opportunity to think aloud about what they have achieved. Sometimes pupils may find it useful to keep some form of work journal in which they make entries describing their personal reactions and feelings about what they have been doing.

Whatever the methods used, the important feature of the de-briefing process is that it enables pupils to focus on their own learning and the contribution they have made to the activities that have taken place. It should be carried out in a positive climate, celebrating achievements and pointing to areas that might be developed during future activities.

Finally, it should be noted that once again this approach, as with most of those recommended throughout 'Special Needs in the Classroom', assumes the existence of a collaborative working relationship between teachers and pupils. It is part of a wider aim to do with helping pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

Unit 3.8

Reading for learning

Unit aim

To introduce some strategies for helping pupils to read more effectively.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Reading for Learning : Some Active Approaches'.
2. In small groups use some of these approaches to plan an activity based around a written text from your own classroom.
3. Carry out the activity in your classroom. Report on your evaluation of the lesson to the rest of the group. In particular consider the following issues:
    - What problems did you encounter?
    - What advantages did you note?
    - What were the pupils' reactions?
    - What did you learn that would help you plan a similar activity?

Evaluation issues

1. Do you feel that you can now help your pupils to be more effective readers?
2. How might you further develop the idea of 'reading for learning' in your classroom?

Reading for learning: some active approaches

Reading is a strategy to learn. It is not a matter of teaching reading in isolation so that a pupil can use the skill later to learn—rather it is a question of purposely using reading activities to facilitate learning.

The reading for learning process involves decoding the text, making sense of what is said and comparing this with the knowledge and experience one brings to the text. As a result, one forms judgements, revises one's knowledge, modifies or adjusts one's thoughts—and as a consequence 'learning takes place'.

One can consider various aspects of reading, but we are going to concentrate on the use of directed group activities to promote purposeful reading in subject lessons.

This material offers some ideas and practices to encourage you to consider the general principles that apply to structuring group reading approaches and to give you a taste of some of the activities you can use.

1 Activities use texts from the normal curriculum. This is not a reading course to be operated separately from the curriculum.

2 Texts that are used must be carefully chosen and worth studying.

3 Activities should be based on purposeful planning and direction from the teacher to structure group discussion.

Summary of the recommended approach

1 Careful selection of the text.

2 Be familiar with the content and construction of the text.

3 Plan the activity with an awareness of the desired outcomes.

4 The activities should be preceded by an introduction for the whole class.

5 Pupils do something to demonstrate they have read and extracted meaning from the text.

6 Teacher concludes with class discussion, a summary etc. to draw together the responses to the activities.

Texts to be used

Either—

1 Extracts of straight unmodified text—'text' meaning textbooks or worksheets.

Or—

2 Extracts of modified text (words may be deleted, diagrams to complete, re-ordered text, etc.)

Both approaches can be used independently of each other or together in the same lesson. Some types of text are particularly suited to one technique or the other, but selection of activities will depend upon the individual passages in question.

Text based work is one way of promoting learning and we advocate its use on a 'modest scale'. The impact and usefulness of the activities will be strengthened if they are used across the curriculum in different subject areas.

Using unmodified text

What will the pupils be asked to do?

1 The pupils' attention is directed towards locating and identifying particular information in the text.

2 The pupils are directed to mark and/or label the located information with the purpose of comprehending the text.

3 The pupils are directed to organize this information and then 'represent' it in some way.

How will the pupils be directed? They may be asked to:

a Underline particular information in the text.

b Mark the text into segments to show 'breaks' between ideas etc.

c Label the text to identify, clarify or summarize information.

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d Group sections of the text into categories.

e Rank sections of the text in order of importance.

The pupils can then be asked to 'represent' the information by:

a Making a list of items they have located in the text.

b Filling in the information they have located in the text into a table or graph..

c Showing the information they have gained in diagrammatic form.

The pupils can also be asked to analyse a text and:

a Deal with questions or issues that are not dealt with in the text or not dealt with adequately.

b Become involved in thinking beyond the text and extending their thoughts into the realms of imagination. The possible activities are endless but will centre on statements like:

'What might have happened if . . .'
'What would be the result if . . .'

Using modified text

What will the pupils be asked to do?

1. The pupils' attention is directed towards activities that involve the completion of text with deletions, the aim being to help the reader identify his or her thinking with that of the author by anticipating the language patterns of the text.
2. The pupils' attention is directed towards activities that involve sequencing disordered text.
3. The pupils are required to predict outcomes before reading the text.

We will now look at these three approaches (completion, sequencing and prediction) in more detail.

Completion activities

They may be asked to:

1. Fill in missing words in a passage using context cues known as the 'Cloze procedure'.
2. Complete tables using the categories of the table and the text as sources of information.
3. Complete diagrams using the unfinished diagram and the text as sources of information.

Cloze procedure

One should make deletions in the text in such a way as to make best use of this activity as a vehicle for learning.

One can make deletions on a regular basis of every ninth word, but it is usually best for the teacher to pick the words to be deleted—for example, every word in a chosen category, like technical terms, using two criteria:

1. There should be sufficient clues left to make the task challenging yet possible;
2. The clues that are going to be used should be as relevant as possible in terms of the desired learning goals.

Does the activity suit the text? Completion is an ideal activity for drawing attention to the main points in a very cohesive passage with no rapid shifts in focus.

Preparing worksheets

1. It is wise to leave an introductory section of the text intact to establish a 'background' of information and give a 'run-in' to the author's style.
2. Use a horizontal bar of standard length (i.e. ——) to indicate a one word gap.
3. Phrases and sentences can be omitted and indicated as follows:

Managing the activity

1. Make sure everyone knows what they are doing and why.
2. Clarify: do they need one word or more to fill the gap? Do they write down the words they suggest or do they just remember them until the class discussion and summary, etc.?
3. Usually the activity is started with an explanation to the class and an introduction; then the pupils are separated to work in groups of 2–5 pupils. The pupils complete the activity and the lesson is concluded with class discussion, possibly involving group representatives, and the teacher.

Sequencing activities

Sequencing activities involve reproducing text in a different order and asking pupils to re-assemble the scrambled sections.

Does the activity suit the text?

Because sequencing involves establishing a coherent order it is fairly obvious that the chosen text must have some intrinsic order or sequence. Sequencing is appropriate for developing the concept of sequential processes, etc.

1. The text needs to be broken up and printed on separate pieces of card or paper.

2 Each piece of text is identified by a random letter or number to facilitate subsequent discussion.

3 Each piece of paper should be the same size, irrespective of the amount of print.

4 There are no fixed rules for the size of segment.

Managing the activity

1 Put the cut-up segments in envelopes or paper clips/rubber bands/staples etc.

2 Pupils are directed to work in pairs or small groups.

3 Class discussion and summary to conclude.

4 The teacher's role is to create the conditions that promote discussion without influencing it in any way and to encourage pupils to justify the decisions they make.

5 The lesson usually ends with a discussion concerning the re-sequencing of the text and disposable texts may be stuck in pupils' books.

Prediction activities

A feature of meaningful reading is the ability to form questions about the text and consider possible solutions, e.g. What comes next? How will it end? Prediction is putting anticipation into words. Pupils are expected to solve the problems which arise from their reading by applying logical judgements based on the evidence they find in the text.

It is possible to combine prediction with an activity based on text analysis. For example, underlining could precede prediction and the underlined features would form the basis of subsequent prediction.

It would be advisable to have experience of other similar activities in text based lessons before using this activity.

Also it is helpful to remember that prediction activities pre-suppose a degree of existing knowledge/experience and this should be confirmed before using such activities.

Preparing materials

1 Present paragraphs, sections, whole chapters, etc. of text and encourage pupils to predict outcomes before releasing the next instalment of text.

2 One can use prepared worksheets or actual text (e.g. chapters, paragraphs).

Managing the activity

1 Pupils are organized into discussion groups of 2–4 members.

2 The teacher needs to decide:

- **a** What are the things that can be learned from the text.
- **b** How they can be focused upon and extracted from the text.

It is not enough to ask the pupils to predict what will happen next? Be more specific. Give a set of questions which are appropriate to the text.

Unit 3.9

Problem solving

Unit aim

To consider strategies for problem solving.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'A Framework for Problem Solving'.
2. Choose a current problem that you face in your own classroom (most teachers can usually think of at least one!). Use the Framework for Problem Solving to formulate a plan of action.
3. Working in small groups (threes or fours), discuss your plan and encourage your colleagues to make suggestions for improvement.
4. Implement your plan and report your findings to your colleagues.

Evaluation issues

1. What have you learned from the exercise?
2. Do you intend to continue using the Framework for Problem Solving approach?

A framework for problem solving

In the past, when problems occurred in schools they tended to be seen as belonging to children. As we have argued in other units, remedial and special education were geared to respond to the question, what is wrong with the child? Nowadays it is generally recognized that educational difficulties occur as a result of the interaction of a complex range of factors, some within children and others more to do with the decisions made by teachers. In other words, the problems that do occur are as much teachers' as they are children's.

We can go further, however, and argue that problems can be a positive feature of what happens in schools. Indeed we believe that dealing with problems is a central part of the process of education. In other words, teachers and pupils should be engaged in activities that help them to become more successful at understanding and dealing with their problems. In this sense, problems that arise in classrooms are opportunities for teachers and pupils to learn.

In these notes we provide a framework that will help with problem solving in schools. It is intended to be used flexibly by teachers and children.

The framework

The framework proposed is a simple one. Its aim of it is to help people to deal with and learn from the problems that they face. Consequently it may be used by children to deal with their problems; teachers to deal with theirs; and, where possible, teachers and pupils collaboratively to overcome problems they share.

This framework requires those facing a problem to address three interrelated questions. These are:

1. What is the problem?
2. What is to be done?
3. How is this to be evaluated?

Let us consider the three questions in turn.

What is the problem?

In the complex environment of a classroom, problems arise frequently. Some of these are intended as a basis for stimulating learning; others are unintended and may lead to negative reactions.

In the case of those problems that create negative reactions the need for early solution is clearly important. Where teachers or children feel that they are faced with a problem they cannot handle, then it is likely to affect their confidence and morale. The first task of problem solving, therefore, is to define the nature of the problem with a view to understanding it more clearly.

In attempting to understanding a problem it is not uncommon to find that it disappears. Often, for example, when teachers discuss a difficulty they are having with a particular child or class they find that having a chance to 'get it off the chest' leads to an awareness that it does not require any special response.

What is to be done?

Having clarified the nature of the problem and determined that it is worthy of some attention, the next step is to formulate a plan of action for its solution. At this stage, the range of possible responses is massive, from a detailed systematic procedure through to a simple, routine change.

Once again, the benefits of collaboration cannot be overstated. Where pupils or teachers face difficult problems the support and suggestions of colleagues are invaluable. Co-operative approaches to learning have particular benefits at the stage of problem solving.

How is this to be evaluated?

Given that the aims are twofold—to solve a particular problem and to learn from the experience—the approach to evaluation needs also to have the twin concerns in mind. The nature of the problem and the responses that are made to it will influence the forms of evaluation that are suitable. Often the agreement to stop and discuss the outcomes of what is being undertaken on a regular basis will be sufficient. The key evaluation questions are: Who needs to know? What information is needed?

As can be seen, this framework is simple, straightforward and based on common sense. It is derived from experience of what goes on as a matter of course in successful schools. There pupils and teachers work collaboratively to help one another identify and resolve the problems that occur, whether these are problems that arise from classroom tasks or problems that are an inevitable outcome of the need for groups of humans to coexist in one room.

In proposing this framework, therefore, we offer it not as some new, technical formula to help solve educational problems. Rather it is a set of simple questions that can be used to focus the mind and formulate practical plans for action.

How can we implement a framework for helping staff to deal with and learn from the problems that they face? The approach that is taken will depend not only upon the nature of the problem, but also on the factors within the school, such as the relationship with support services, the resources that are available, and the policy and practice of working with parents. It must be recognized that there is no single way in which a school should proceed and that there is rarely a perfect outcome. However, this merely reinforces our view that it is important for staff to accept that teaching is about adult learning as well as children's learning, and that it is important for schools to view problem solving as an opportunity to put into practice a process that is similar to the hypothesis testing used by scientists.

Unit 3.10

Putting it together

Unit aim

To consider how the various strategies discussed in this module might be put into practice.

Activities

1 A class of children has been working on the theme 'My Town'. The class teacher is concerned that not all pupils in the class have been fully involved as (s)he would have liked. Three children have been described by the teacher as 'rarely producing any worthwhile work...' On a number of occasions their boredom and frustration have led to acts of disruptive behaviour. The teacher is anxious to involve all members of class in some meaningful way on the next stage of this topic.

2 In groups decide how you might tackle this project to ensure that all members of the class take part in, and benefit from, the experience.

3 Present your ideas, as suggestions for the class teacher, on big sheets of paper and be prepared to explain the decisions you have made.

Evaluation issues

1 What was most significant for you about this activity?

2 How might you integrate the approaches you have been discussing into your own teaching?

SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Module 4

Help and support

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Guide

The focus of attention in Module 4 is on finding and using support. This leads us to look in some detail at the way relationships can influence learning. Once again, we want you to reflect upon your own attitudes and behaviour in considering this matter. Experience suggests that the capacity of schools to respond to pupils as individuals is facilitated by an atmosphere of collaboration. There must also be routines and rules that provide a secure social framework. In considering how positive relationships can be encouraged we will also be wanting you to consider relationships with the wider community, particularly parents, and the possibilities of children helping each other.

As you will be aware, there exists a complex network of relationships within a school. These relationships have considerable potential for influencing, both positively and negatively, the children's learning. In this Module we consider some of the more important aspects of relationships and attitudes with a view to finding ways of developing a generally positive climate within a school. In particular, we will be looking at aspects of:

- Child-teacher relationships
- Child-child relationships
- Parent-teacher relationships

Child-teacher relationships

Of paramount importance in any school is the relationship that exists between children and teachers. Through their day-to-day interactions, the working ethos of the school is created. It is what is sometimes called 'the hidden curriculum'. In order to consider this area with respect to your own school you may find it useful to reflect on the following questions:

- How do children view the teachers?
- How do teachers view the children?

We will consider each of these in turn.

Walking round any school and listening to children talking will frequently reveal how the staff in a school are viewed by the children. For example:

'Mr Smith is horrible. He always shouts.'

'I can never understand what Miss White wants me to do.'

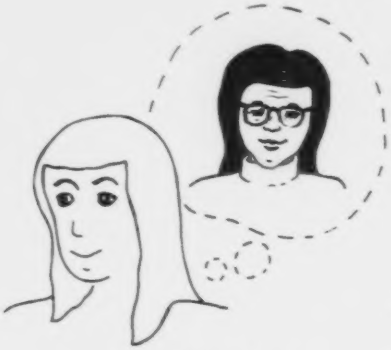
'Miss Giles is very kind—if you can't do the work she'll always help you.'

'I like Jonesy. He always takes you seriously.'

'You can do anything you like in Mr Palmer's class. He doesn't care.'

Generally, children are very good at analysing the professional competence of their teachers. They are not slow to assess both strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, once attitudes have been formed they are not so easy to change. It is, therefore, important to ensure that, as a teacher, you get off to a good start with the children.

Research suggests that personal relationships within school are very important. For example, it has been found that teachers who have a good relationship with their pupils are in a better position to maintain



Miss Giles is kind

discipline, are viewed positively by the children, and are forgiven for difficulties that they might get into. On the other hand, teachers who do not enjoy such a cordial relationship with their pupils find it difficult to get the class to work together, and when they make any slip it is quickly exploited by the children.

If relationships are so important, then what are the aspects of forming good relationships that need to be considered by teachers? We suggest that teachers who do develop good relationships show the following:

Care

It is important that teachers like being with children, and show a genuine concern for their feelings. Children like to feel that their views are respected, and in turn will respect someone who shows that they care for them by being interested in their feelings and aspirations. As the child above said,

'I like Jonesy. He always takes you seriously.'

Control

Showing care and concern does not mean being soft. Pupils are unlikely to respect a teacher who adopts a laissez-faire policy. They prefer teachers who make demands on them and have high expectations for them. As one of the children above says, being allowed to do anything you like does not show a really caring attitude by the teacher.

Being in control means that as a teacher you may periodically have to withstand challenges to your authority. Some children come to school having already been socialized to respect those in authority. For others, it is possible that the reverse may be true. They may come from families and neighbourhoods that show little respect for authority. It is then necessary for the staff to demonstrate by control that they do care for their pupils. That is, teachers need to establish their status by demonstrating that they have a right to control the class. They need to behave from the start as if this right is undisputed. This will be enhanced if teachers appear relaxed and confident, as well as behaving as people invested with status, for example, by controlling movement in the class. As all teachers know, it is much easier to start off by demonstrating status than to attempt to achieve it later on, when some children may have already concluded that the teacher is not worthy of the position.

Establishing status, however, is not the only factor that needs to be considered. It is also important to look at longer-term relationships. Starting off in a firm manner, with clearly stated rules may help to establish good relationships, but they will be more readily maintained if the teacher can establish a more democratic process in the classroom. Discipline should eventually be maintained by negotiation, so that the children are in a better position to control themselves. This does not mean that there are not clear rules, and consequences for breaking rules, but rather that each child accepts more individual responsibility for governing his or her own behaviour, and maybe for negotiating appropriate consequences for breaking rules or even for formulating the rules in the first place. By such an approach it is easier to respond to individual needs, since it is possible to have different rules for different children or groups of children. For example, one child may be required to produce two pages of written work, whilst for another child two sentences would be a major achievement. Failure to produce the required work may, in turn, result in different consequences for the two children.

Traditionally, teachers may have seen children as the passive recipients of knowledge. They assumed they automatically had the status to hold an authoritative role, and could direct children, who would not question. It is now recognized that such a view placed considerable limitations on the educative process. It did not do justice to the children since it did not view them as individuals in their own right. It also increased the possibility of schooling being a belittling process where personal qualities are neglected and all judgements are related to externally imposed criteria. This proved to be a particular problem for some low-achieving pupils whose strengths and weaknesses may not have been given the consideration they deserved. Teachers need to deal with pupils as individuals, with the personal rights and status that implies. This entails a degree of negotiation between teacher and child. As one junior age child was heard to say:

> 'I know that I'm no good at school work. That doesn't mean I'm no good as a person. Being told that I'm remedial all the time doesn't help and makes me feel that teachers think I've got nothing to offer.'

What then is important in establishing good pupil-teacher relationships? Four areas seem to be of particular importance in forging good relationships between teacher and child. These are:

1. classroom organization
2. goal setting
3. teacher behaviour
4. appropriate rules

1 *Classroom organization*

It is important that teachers do everything they can to ensure that the classroom is a good place to be. This means examining lesson content and presentation, organization of groups and physical layout.

2 *Goal setting*

The importance of purpose and meaning in learning activities has already been emphasized. It is also important for the children to understand the short- and long-term objectives of the classroom. There is now a lot of evidence to suggest that pupils can take some responsibility not only for formulating their own programmes of work but also for monitoring their progress. Many teachers are surprised at how children can talk about their priorities in the classroom. Perhaps we should consider consulting the consumers more frequently?

3 *Teacher behaviour*

Not surprisingly, the manner in which teachers behave has a direct influence on the behaviour of pupils. Because of their position of status, a teacher's influence can be considerable. How many parents have heard their children say, 'But my teacher told me to'? Not only do teachers provide a model of behaviour that their pupils might copy, but they are also in a good position to shape and change the behaviour of the children in their classes. Two major ways in which this is done is by reward and punishment. Reward and punishment also influence the way in which relationships develop and flourish. Unfortunately, teachers frequently provide pupils with insufficient positive feedback about what they are doing. Although we are not denying that teachers need to be critical, it is important that they criticize constructively, whilst also recognizing when it is possible to provide encouragement. As the child quoted earlier said, 'Mr Smith is horrible. He always shouts'. If you stop and analyse your own responses in the classroom, you may be surprised how infrequently you provide positive feedback and encouragement to your pupils.

4 *Appropriate rules*

All schools have a set of rules. In addition, each teacher will have a number of rules that apply to their classrooms and define what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour. Rules can be established in two ways. They may be formal and explicit; for example, 'No one must eat in class.' Alternatively, they can be implicit and established by case law; for example, it is unlikely that a teacher would state the rule 'Do not poke the child next to you with a ruler.'

It is a good idea to start off with a new class by making some basic rules explicit. As the relationship with the class develops it is then possible to negotiate and discuss the introduction of new rules, or the modification of the original rules. Certainly, rules that are frequently broken should be re-examined, as it may be because they are not very practical. For example, twenty children waiting in a line to have their work marked may find it very difficult to wait in an orderly fashion. It would therefore be better to limit the number of children, or better still move round the class looking at the work of individuals and groups.

Attitudes to children with disabilities

A particular aspect of the way teachers perceive their pupils is raised by the presence of children who have significant impairments or disabilities. It relates to the changes in thinking that are discussed in Module 2 with respect to the notion of special needs in education.

You will recall that it is still common practice for the education service to categorize and label children according to their disability. Such an approach, although often used for administrative reasons, still tends to suggest that the problem rests solely with the child. For example, it may be considered that children are having difficulty acquiring literacy skills because they are 'dyslexic'. The danger of such an approach is that it is a circular argument that may give rise to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Furthermore, it does not provide any ideas as to what can be done to teach the child literacy skills.

Labelling can also give rise to erroneous conclusions, as one young man with a physical disability recalled when recounting his own experience in school:

'When it was decided I could go to an ordinary school I had to have an interview with the Headmaster. I can recall him telling my parents that before he could admit me I'd have to have an IQ test. I can remember feeling insulted. No other child had to have such an assessment prior to admission. It was obvious that the Head felt that my physical disability meant that I was probably dull.'

The student 'passed' his IQ test, did very well at the school, and went on to gain further qualifications at a College of Higher Education.

For most children with disabilities, placement in an ordinary school, alongside others from their community, can lessen their feeling of being different. Occasionally such a placement has been known to heighten a child's awareness of the differences between other children and themselves. The key factor here is the attitudes of the other children and the staff.

One of the problems with attempts at integration is that it is assumed that the mere proximity of children with disabilities and children without disabilities will benefit both groups. However, evidence is now accumulating to suggest that the mere placing of children together does not necessarily result in any positive interaction and, indeed, may eventually result in negative attitudes developing. One major area of difficulty that has been identified is that both groups may not have the necessary skills to interact successfully. Frequently, one of the criteria used for placing children in special education is that they have been difficult to manage in ordinary classrooms, and if their behaviour is difficult nothing will mark them out as being different more quickly. This is particularly so with other children. Although we may not label such children, other children certainly will, and generally with labels that are considerably more damaging than any previously used.

It is not only the skills of those with disabilities that need to be considered; the skills of other pupils must also be taken into consideration. Do they know how to approach children with obvious difficulties?

Do they appreciate the needs and feelings of others? Do they know what to expect in terms of behaviour and attitudes?

Style of classroom management is another important factor. A regime that encourages competition, rather than co-operation, is likely to make it very difficult for those with disabilities. This is another reason why the co-operative learning approaches described in Module 3 are so good at meeting the needs of all children.

Points to consider

- How do you think the children in your class view you as a teacher?
- Do you agree that children should not be seen as passive recipients of knowledge?

Child-child relationships

A significant resource for helping all children to learn successfully is the use of what has been called 'peer power'. In other words, children can be encouraged to help one another. This approach can be particularly important in helping children experiencing difficulties, or those who have disabilities. Schools that use peer power successfully may employ a variety of approaches, including an emphasis on co-operative learning in groups, as described in Module 3, and the use of various forms of peer tutoring.

There is a lot of research evidence, for example, that suggests that peers trained as tutors can sometimes be more effective than adults at improving reading or teaching particular content such as mathematical concepts. This may be as a result of their tendency to be more directive than adults; their familiarity with the material being taught; their understanding of the other child's frustrations; or because of their use of more meaningful and age-appropriate vocabulary and examples.

Peer tutoring partnerships are, therefore, a sensible way for teachers to provide extra help to individual pupils. It is important to note that such approaches can also have a positive effect on those pupils providing the help, both in terms of their academic and social development.

Historically, some pupils, particularly those with disabilities, have been excluded from certain aspects of their school life (e.g. school clubs, social events). Various types of peer support groups have proven to be an effective way of enabling these pupils to participate more fully.

The purpose of a peer support network is to enrich the school life of another pupil. Some teachers who tried this approach summed it up as follows:

> 'Peer support is a bunch of kids working together to break down the barriers that society has built into the public's idea of what the norm is.'

'Peer buddies' is a specific form of peer tutoring in which the involvement with other pupils is primarily non-academic. The possibilities for this idea are limitless. For example, a peer buddy might assist a pupil with a physical disability to use and get items from his or her locker. It might simply mean being with the pupil before or after classes. A peer buddy might also see it as their role to help other pupils and teachers understand the difficulties and challenges faced by their friend.

In some schools peers have also proved to be valuable members of planning groups set up to aid the integration of pupils with disabilities. Indeed in one school a group of pupils met with teachers to plan the transition of a pupil with multiple disabilities from a residential special school. The advice they gave was very practical, ranging from suggestions for a specialized communication device to what kind of notebook he should have to help him fit in.

Clearly the potential for pupils to help one another in school is massive. Its use requires teachers to take a lead in encouraging their pupils to participate.

Points to consider

- How do you feel about the idea of encouraging children to help one another in the ways suggested here?
- Would you like to learn more about approaches such as peer tutoring?

Parent-teacher relationships

Involving parents on a broad basis within school not only leads to the development of positive relationships between home and school but also makes it more likely that the parents will take an active interest in the education of their children. This can have a beneficial effect on the pupils when they see parent and teacher co-operating. It can lead to problems being defused before they get out of hand. It is therefore never too early to involve parents. Unfortunately, some schools appear to adopt the policy that parents should be involved only when trouble arises. Such an approach is unlikely to work to the benefit of the child, and may precipitate feelings of anger and frustration from both parties. In examining parent-teacher relationships it is helpful to bear in mind the following:

- parents are not a homogeneous group
- parents have needs as well as strengths.

We shall now look in turn at the needs and the strengths of parents and how knowledge about this can help to foster positive parent-teacher relationships.

All parents need basic information about their children. They should understand what are the basic aims of the school as well as having information about school policies. Where possible they should be involved in decision making—for example, decisions to refer to outside agencies, change classes, etc. They should also be kept informed of the progress made by their child, and the school's view of their child's strengths and weaknesses.

If it proves necessary to embark on a more formal assessment of a child's educational needs, then there should have been considerable liaison with the parents prior to reaching this decision. Unfortunately, it all too often seems to be the case that such matters are treated casually. One of the problems is that, if schools do not provide adequate information and advice, other organizations will. Once this happens it tends to lead to an adversarial position as the parent is changed from advocate to adversary.

Most parents appreciate information about their child so that they can take part in future decisions. They also appreciate the importance of providing the most appropriate educational environment, as is illustrated by the following range of comments made by some parents when they were asked what they considered to be some of the most important features of their child's schooling:

'The teacher is all important. Their attitudes can make or break my child. What I really want is a teacher who can show a genuine interest in my child's problems.'

Parents understand that considerable pressures are placed on teachers, although they obviously still want the best for their children. For example:

'I don't expect the teacher to be a miracle worker, but I do want them to do their best for my child.'

Or, as another parent said,

'I certainly wouldn't want to be in charge of 30 children, and be held responsible for their progress. However, teachers go a long way to determining whether schooling is a good or bad experience, whether children learn or whether they don't, whether they are happy or miserable, whether they are self-confident or reticent. We'd be quite happy to move house if it meant our child had a good, rather than an indifferent teacher.'

Certainly parents feel very strongly about the education that their children are receiving. But why shouldn't they? If we value education, then it should be something for which it is worth fighting.

In addition to the basic information described above, some parents feel that they need more detailed information on certain areas. They may be keen to meet other parents with a common goal of improving their skills of child rearing. They may want specific help and advice about teaching their children. The research evidence undoubtedly indicates that parents can be highly successful in helping their children acquire specific skills. For example, work with pre-school children and their parents in the Portage Project has shown that they can be very good at teaching skills, while paired reading schemes show that parental involvement is a powerful incentive in helping children to read.

In addition to having needs, parents also have strengths. This must be recognized by schools, otherwise parents can remain an untapped resource.

It is surprising that many people working in education forget that parents have considerable knowledge and insight about their children. Again, listening to what parents say about this reinforces the point:

'Why can't teachers realize that I know more about my child than anyone else in the world. I know their likes, their dislikes, their strengths, their weaknesses, their aspirations and their fears. All I ask is that teachers listen to what I have to say.'

'After I had managed to get a meeting with Anne's teachers I was surprised and upset to discover that my views did not appear to count for much.'

'I have been unable to convince Emma's teacher that she just thrives on praise. It's no good me saying to her that she's doing well at school. She wants to hear it from her teacher. I don't even think it's always her fault when she gets it wrong. Sometimes she's just given inappropriate work.'

Parents' knowledge about their children means that they should be viewed more as partners. Parents as partners seems to be a concept that is gaining credibility, although it is rarely defined. We would suggest that, if parents are to become true partners in their child's education, it is essential that:

- parents are seen as active participants, who can make a valid and valued contribution to their child's education;

- parents become an integral part of decision making;
- recognition is given to the considerable knowledge parents possess about their children;
- the strengths of parents are capitalized on and used to complement professional skills;
- there is a shared responsibility between parents and professionals.

If it is recognized that parents possess useful information about their children that may be of help to professionals, then this is the first step to capitalizing on parents' strengths. It will be found, for example, that most parents are willing and able to contribute in some of the following ways:

- helping their children with specific work at home;
- monitoring the progress of their children on a regular basis;
- assisting with the preparation of classroom materials;
- helping with school outings;
- serving on committees or specific school groups;
- helping other children in the classroom under the supervision of the teacher;
- organizing fund-raising events;
- talking to, and perhaps even teaching, groups of children about their own skills and interests.

Some parents have the desire, time and commitment to make a more specific input. For example, they may be well placed to tap the resources of the community or to organize groups for other parents, which might focus on specific problem areas, or be more involved with offering general support.

A group of parents in one school were asked to suggest some advice for teachers on how to establish better working relationships with families.

Their suggestions were:

Be honest. Recognize that the parent you are talking to has responsibility for the child in your care, that they love them and want to do the best for them. Of course, they want to hear good things but they also want people to be realistic. However, it is important to present a balanced picture so that not only are problems discussed, but also the child's strengths are mentioned. Also give credit where credit is due.

Listen. As mentioned above, if parents have knowledge of their children, then it is important to listen to what they have to say. As one mother said, 'I've been with my child all his life. I think this qualifies me to speak with some authority about him.'

Admit when you don't know. Parents will frequently have questions about their children's progress. They do not expect professionals to have all the answers. Indeed, they may find it a relief if a professional honestly admits that they do not know something. For example, one parent said to her child's teacher: 'I was so grateful when you said you couldn't say how well my child would be doing in a few years but that if we all worked together we should be able to get the very best from him.'

Offer praise. Parents frequently have to try out a number of strategies to cope with everyday problems, problems that can be very disturbing for family life. It is therefore not surprising that they want the efforts they have made recognized, rather than the focus to be continually on what they need to do next.

The other side of this is that perhaps we, as professionals, should offer some advice to parents on how to get the best out of their children's learning, particularly if they are anxious about their progress. For example:

Seek support. Support might come from informal sources, like family or friends, or might be obtained from more formal support groups.

Obtain information. Parents should make an effort to get as much information as they can from a variety of sources. Often the first port of call is the teacher, who is then in a good position to point them in other directions.

Be assertive. As one parent said, 'Making sure you are involved in the decision making makes it more likely you'll get the resources. The squeaky wheel gets the oil, and that's really true.' This is certainly true if resources are limited. There is a great temptation on the part of those who have responsibility for administering resources to make sure that those who are the most persistent get them.

Support your child. It is important that children can turn to their parents and expect support and encouragement in what they do. This does not mean that all their actions should be condoned, but it may mean that a parent will have to argue the case for their child.

Looking at the way parents view teachers is only half the story, of course. We also need to be aware of our attitudes towards the parents of the children we teach.

Broadly, teachers tend to perceive parents in one of the following ways:

Obstructive. Frequently teachers attribute a child's difficulties to home background. They claim that the parents' personal affairs affect the education of their child, or that they don't give their child enough attention or that they give them too much. There may be some truth in such statements, but, as there is little that the teacher can do to influence this type of situation, is it in fact worth considering?

A resource. Many teachers capitalize on the strengths of parents, using them in some of the ways described above—for example, helping their children with reading or developing materials for the class.

Partners. Again the idea of partnership between teachers and parents has been discussed above, as has the desirability of working together to foster a mutual understanding of a child's strengths and weaknesses.

Consumers. Some teachers may view the parent as a consumer of a service. If this view is adopted it makes it more legitimate for parents to complain and offer advice about the service.

Inevitably your attitude towards parents will be influenced by which of these four perspectives you tend to take. In turn your attitudes will be reflected in your behaviour. There is, therefore, a 'hidden curriculum' behind the relative formality of teacher-parent encounters. These hidden messages are often influential in terms of the overall rapport between a school and the community it serves.

Points to consider

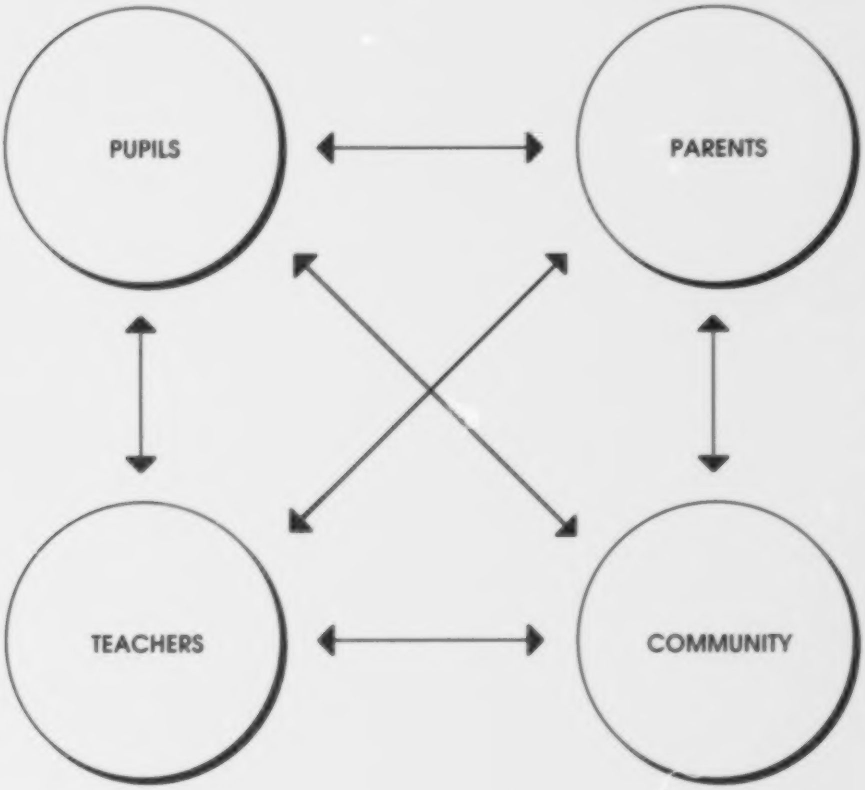
- How would you characterize your own attitude to the parents of the children you teach?
- How do you feel about the idea of parents as partners?

A final point

Whilst this study material has concentrated on relationships between children, teachers and parents, we must not forget other significant relationships that can have an influence on the success of schools. For example, relationships within schools, between teachers and other adults who are employed there, and links between schools and their wider communities, are all very important. In addition, the support that teachers provide for one another is crucial.

Module 4 Summary

Children learn better in schools where there are good social relationships. In particular:


PUPILS
PARENTS
TEACHERS
COMMUNITY

The units that follow will help you to consider in more detail issues raised in the study material. Your course leader will explain how these units are to be dealt with.

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Unit 4.1

Social climate of the classroom

Unit aim

To consider factors that affect the social climate of the classroom and help to make the environment more conducive for effective learning.

Activities

1. In groups brainstorm a list of typical classroom management problems and another list of the factors that you think may contribute to these problems.
2. Present your lists to the other groups.
3. Read the discussion material, 'Rules and Routines'
4. With your group, decide on a grade level you want to work with. Using the checklist provided in the discussion material, decide on what the procedures will be for your group's class.
5. Pick out five to six of these procedures that would be appropriate class rules. Write out the rules in a positive way.
6. Share your rules with the other groups. After the discussion, see if there are any alterations you may want to make for the rules you have chosen.

Evaluation issues

1. Have you been giving classroom management its due time for planning and implementation?
2. Has this activity helped clarify for you any aspect of classroom management that you may need to improve? If so, what?

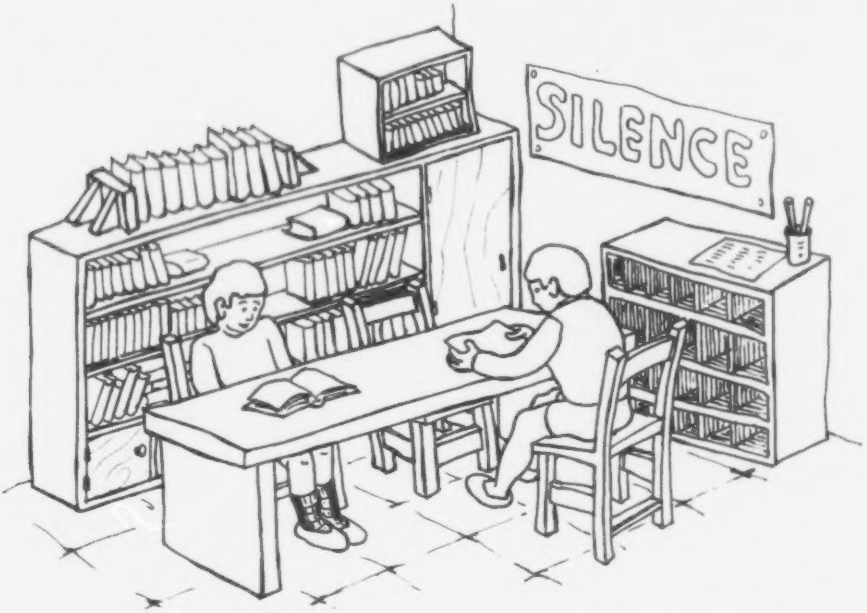
Rules and routines

It is always a pleasure to walk into a classroom and find students busy at work, all knowing what to do and when to do it, the teacher moving easily among the students to give assistance when needed, and a positive and encouraging atmosphere for the students. It is in such a classroom that teaching and learning are both efficient and effective.

Achieving such a level of functioning is attainable only if the teacher takes the time to plan and implement consistently procedures and rules by which to manage her class. Good classroom management is a necessity for the teacher to be able to teach with ease and for students to enhance their learning.

Before the school year begins, a teacher has to start by deciding how to arrange the classroom: the seating arrangement, the teacher's desk, bookshelves, game area, place for lunch boxes and coats, etc. The way the walls are going to be used also has to be decided upon: places for students' written and art work, for poems or songs, for illustrative materials for different topics, class rules, etc.

Once all the physical setting is ready, then the teacher has to start planning on how the students will function within the classroom as well as in the school. For example, when students are permitted to get out of their seats to sharpen a pencil, get a book, go to a learning centre or go to the bathroom. The more clear these and other procedures are for the students the less disruption occurs in the classroom and the more smoothly the day will run.



In the checklist provided overleaf, various areas of classroom management are mentioned. It may be helpful to take each one by itself, think of what the students need to know concerning each item and what will happen if a student does not do what is expected. It may seem tedious but it will pay off in the long run. At the beginning of the school year, the teacher has to plan time when all of these procedures will be explained and taught to the students. The younger the students, the more time it may take for them to learn. When given due time and the teacher is consistent in their implementation, she will gain a lot in the long run and will have little wasted time during the day on inappropriate and disruptive behaviours.

From all of the procedures that the teacher decides upon, a few may become rules for the class. These are chosen according to what important behaviours the teacher feels he/she should concentrate on. The decision of what rules to choose depends a lot on the age of the students. For example in first grade, there may be rules for students about raising their hands before they speak and tidying up their desk at the end of the day.

Older students may have rules about listening to other students' opinions and tidying their files once a week. These rules can sometimes be decided upon by the students with the teacher, if their age permits them to do so. A list of these may be placed on a wall, at a place visible by all.

It is preferable to state the rules in a way which describes the behaviour positively such as 'I listen when another person speaks' rather than 'I don't talk while someone else is speaking'. Sometimes rules can be general, but either in discussion or in writing, they can be clarified, e.g. 'I respect others' means I wait my turn, I ask to borrow something from another student, I listen to another person speaking, etc.

It should be mentioned that to ensure a good social climate within a classroom not only good classroom management is needed but also a relationship between the teacher and the students based on mutual respect, acceptance and understanding of each others needs.

Checklist for classroom management procedures

A *In school*

1 Lining up

2 Use of bathrooms

3 Library

4 Administration

5 Playing

6 Cafeteria

B *In class*

1 Desks and storage areas for students

2 Teacher's desk and/or closet

3 Bookshelves

Game area

Learning centres

4 Pencil sharpener

5 Class chores

6 Beginning of day

End of day

7 When visitors come

C *During lessons/activities*

1 Student participation

2 Talking with other students

3 Raising hand to speak

4 Passing out materials, books, worksheets

5 What to do when in-class work is finished

6 Handing in homework

7 Homework not done

D *Others*

Unit 4.2

Problem behaviour

Unit aim

To give participants the opportunity to study a management problem related to a given student.

Activities

1 Write down a detailed report about the behaviour of a student in your class that you feel you are not managing well.

2 After reading the Discussion Material 'Responding to Problem Behaviour' provided, observe the student's behaviour for one to two weeks and record your observations. Invite a colleague to visit your class and observe the student at hand a minimum of three times during these two weeks.

3 If after the observation you think there still is a problem, then formulate a plan of action and discuss it with your colleague. Implement it for two to four weeks.

4 Evaluate your plan of action.

5 Share this experience with your colleagues.

Evaluation issues

1 What have you learned from observing the 'problem' student?

2 Will you use the framework for problem solving in future?

Responding to problem behaviour

In Unit 4.1 we look into what kinds of problems one may have in managing a classroom and what factors may contribute to these problems. It is stated that if one takes the time to plan and implement procedures for classroom management then there will be an atmosphere that will permit effective teaching and successful learning to take place. However, sometimes even in a well managed classroom, a teacher has one or a few students who consistently behave inappropriately, thus disrupting the smooth flow of activities for both the teacher and the other students. In such a situation the teacher has to take up some extra measures to deal with this problem.

In Unit 3.9, a framework is presented for problem solving. It suggests that one can address the following questions in attempting to deal with a problem:

- What is the problem?
- What is to be done?
- How is this to be evaluated?

Keeping in line with this framework, we will consider the problem of a student who is disrupting the class to the point that some special attention is required.

What is the problem?

In studying what the problem is, a series of questions can be asked that try to specify what factors are contributing to this problem.

- When does it occur, throughout the day or at certain times of the day?
- Does it occur during all subject areas or in specific subjects only?
- Does it occur throughout the whole period or at specific times:
  - during teacher explanations
  - during questions and answers
  - during paperwork
  - during small group work
  - during free play
- Does it happen when the student is seated next to certain students or in certain places in the classroom?
- Does it occur more often at the beginning of the week?
- How do you react when the student misbehaves?

- How do the students react when the student misbehaves?
- How does the student react to his own misbehaviour?

What is to be done?

After answering these questions, it may become clear what factors are contributing to this student's problem and consequently it will be easier to decide on a plan of action. This will involve making alterations that will contribute to lessening the effect of these factors so that the problem behaviours will decrease. It should be mentioned that a behaviour sometimes requires a long time for it to change. So the plan of action should take this into consideration. At times, it may be helpful to try teaching the student a more positive behaviour that may replace the inappropriate behaviour. This will need a lot of encouraging from the teacher. It is also very effective when the other students help in encouraging the student at hand.

How is this to be evaluated?

It is necessary to keep some record of the occurrence of the behaviour before and after the plan of action is implemented. Sometimes the changes that occur are so small that if one does not keep a record, one may think that the plan of action is not effective. It is preferable that the record keeping be simple as the teacher will be busy with many other things and will not be able to cope with any time consuming record keeping.

All of the procedures mentioned above are fairly simple ones. However, considering how much a teacher has to do, it may be helpful to ask a colleague to do the observations and record keeping for you on a regular basis till the plan of action is ended.

Unit 4.3

Child-to-child

Unit aim

To consider the implications and possible use of Child-to-child activities.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Child-to-child'
2. Discuss in small groups the idea of Child-to-child.
3. Make a list of suggestions for using Child-to-child approaches.
4. Report back to the main group on your conclusions.

Evaluation issues

1. How might Child-to-child approaches be used in your school?
2. What difficulties would you anticipate?

Some Child-to-child approaches

A significant trend that is common to communities in both developed and developing countries is an interest in using Child-to-child approaches. These can take many forms. For example, these approaches are used in many rural districts in developing countries to provide support to children with disabilities. Similarly in a number of Western countries planned use of 'peer power' has been utilized as an effective strategy for integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms.

Common to all these approaches is an attempt to ensure that children in a community have a chance to better understand persons who, for whatever reason, are different from themselves—in colour, in dress, in beliefs, in language, in movements, or in abilities. These approaches show that when they gain a little more understanding, children who have been cruel or feel uncomfortable with a child who seems different, can become that child's best friends and helpers.

Specific approaches to Child-to-child include:

Child-to-child in developing countries

Since the 1970s UNESCO and other agencies have supported a large number of projects (for example, in Africa and India) in which school-age children learn ways to protect the health and well-being of other children—especially younger children and those with special needs. The children learn simple preventive and curative measures appropriate to their own communities. They pass on what they learn to other children and their families. The approach rests on three basic assumptions:

1 That education becomes more effective if it is linked closely to things that matter to children, their families and their communities.

2 That education in school and education out of school should be linked as closely as possible so that learning becomes a part of life.

3 That children have the will, the skill and the motivation to help educate each other and can be trusted to do so.

The purpose of Child-to-child activities that relate to disability is to help children:

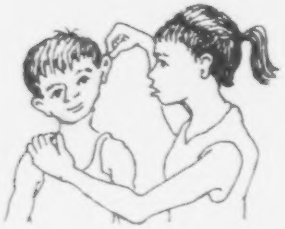
- gain awareness of different disabilities and what it might be like to be disabled;
- learn that although a disabled person may have difficulty doing some things, he she may be able to do other things extra well;
- think of ways that they can help disabled children feel welcome, take part in their play, schooling, and other activities, and manage to do things better;

- become the friends and defenders of any child who is different or has special needs.

As a result of projects in different parts of the world many excellent materials are available to support Child-to-child initiatives. Overleaf is an example reproduced from: Werner, D. (1987) *Disabled Village Children : A Guide for Community Health Workers, Rehabilitation Workers, and Families,* published by The Hesperian Foundation, PO Box 1692, Palo Alto, CA 94302, U.S.A.

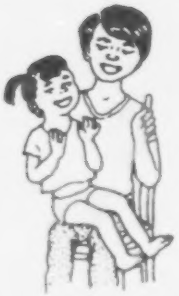
HOW CAN CHILDREN HELP CARE FOR THEIR BROTHERS' AND SISTERS' EARS?

They can regularly look to be sure that there is no pus or small objects inside. If they see anything wrong they should tell an older person, who should take the child to a health worker.



HEARING GAMES THAT CHILDREN CAN PLAY WITH BABIES

Most babies who are 'deaf' hear something. They need help in learning to listen. The children may think of games to help babies listen and learn.

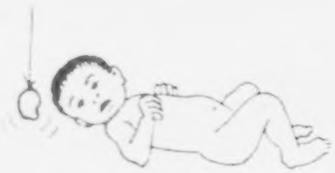


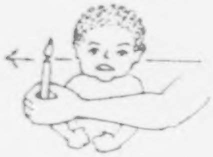
For example:

- Sing to babies, and teach songs to young children.
- Tell them stories and change voices to sound like different people in the story (loud, soft, angry).

Testing if a baby sees (for a child over 3 months old)

- Children can notice if the baby begins to look at things held in front of him, to follow them with his eyes, to smile at mother's face, and later to reach for things held out to him.
- Hang a bright colored object in front of the baby's face and move it from side to side. Does the baby follow with his eyes or head?
- If not, in a fairly dark room, move a lighted candle or torch (flashlight) in front of the child's face. Repeat 2 or 3 times.





If the baby does not follow the object or light with his eyes or head, probably he does not see. He will need special help in learning to do things and move about without seeing. Other children can help. (See Chapter 30.)

Extract from: David Werner, *Disabled Village Children. A guide for community health workers, rehabilitation workers, and families*, The Hesperian Foundation, Palo Alto, CA, USA, 1987.

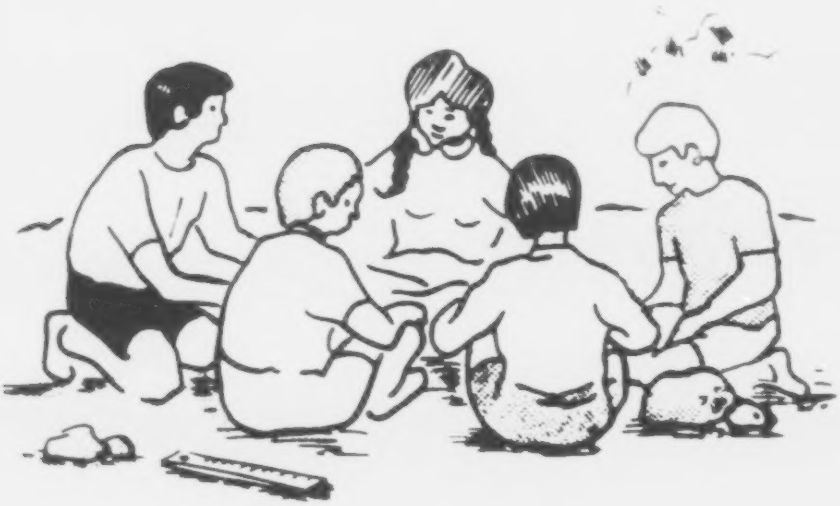
Circle of Friends

This approach was developed in Canada. It is a structured process for involving classmates in welcoming a student with special needs and getting to know the new member of class. The purpose of the circle is to gather round the student a group of friends who will include him or her in activities in and out of school.

An early project may be to set up a student's telephone committee to chat on a daily basis about the student's experience of his or her new school environment. A facilitator helps to get a friendship circle off the ground and is available to offer support, guidance and advice as the group develops. It is accepted that membership of the group will change but lasting friendships are possible.

A friendship circle is not set up as a 'special friends project' for 'unfortunate' students or in the sense of 'doing a good turn'. It is intended to involve children in real, caring, friendships and support roles with their peers. Students without disabilities, as well as those with, have the opportunity to benefit from the experience.

Sometime just before or after the new student arrives, the facilitator invites the class members to join the new circle. The first meeting begins with telling the story of the new student in a way that helps her to talk about her dreams. The children will respond with suggestions about how they can do things together and what problems they expect to encounter. The facilitator should encourage them to carry out these projects, and support their own problem solving. The facilitator needs to be in touch with the natural rhythm of the circle, helping it to meet as often as necessary to foster mutual support and relationships. At the same time meetings should not be overly formalized, and a simple get together at lunch time is often sufficient. Above all they help the children to get a sense of when and how their meetings should be conducted.



As the circle continues to spend time and do things together they will have their own story to tell. The facilitator should support them to tell their story to each other and to other people on a regular basis. It is important to make sure that the new child's dream is always part of the story, so that each member of the circle, as well as others in the community will see how the child's gifts and participation are growing. This will help the circle to keep its energy and its membership strong.

At times a very difficult problem will arise. The facilitator must help the children to talk over these difficulties and to come up with solutions. In turn the facilitator must protect the children's right to try out their own ideas. This will cause their relationship to grow strong. It will also show the community that new and creative means of living and working together are possible.

When the time comes to build a new curriculum for the new student, the students of the circle have become the experts who can tell the teachers, parents, and principal a great deal about what will work and what their friend has to offer, and gain from participating in the life of the classroom.

The following comments from students taking part in a friendship circle illustrate, the reciprocal value of membership. The students' comments are taken from an account of 'circle-building' at St Mary's High School in Hamilton, Ontario.

Student 1: 'I try not to use the word special anymore. I call my friends by their names.'

Student 2: 'I used to sit in the corner and be afraid to talk to people. Now I talk to anyone, I'm not afraid.'

Student 3: 'This is my last year at St Mary's. I never felt like I did anything. Now I feel I've done something good.'

Student 4: 'Before, I thought if there was a handicapped person in the family I couldn't cope with it.'

Student 5: 'Now I feel students with handicaps do have a chance.'

Student 6: 'At the beginning I thought of them as retarded. I was scared. Then I became less prejudiced.'

Student 7: 'I got more open minded.'

Student 8: 'I've met lots of new people by being involved. I never would have thought about this before.'

Making Action Plans (MAPS)

This is a continuing planning process to facilitate the integration of a student with a disability. It was also developed in Canada.

The membership of a MAPS team usually includes the student with a disability or learning difficulty, members of the student's circle of friends, family members, and professionals who know the student. The inclusion of children in the planning process is considered essential because of their unique insight into what is needed to facilitate integration into the ordinary classroom. Children also have a major role in supporting a peer with high needs in ordinary settings.

Seven key questions are at the heart of the MAPS process and provide a structure which helps the team of adults and children to decide what direction to take.

The questions focus on history of the student; dream for the student's future; nightmare for the future; picture of the student as an individual; the student's strengths, gifts and talents; the student's needs; and an ideal day for the student. A facilitator and recorder are needed to guide the team through the process and summarize the group's thinking.

MAPS is a two-part process. Part one creates a picture of who the new student is and the direction everyone wants to take to assist the student to be an active learner. This part is completed by all members of the team in one meeting. The second part usually involves smaller groups planning specific ways to move in the overall direction set in part one.

The smaller groups meet, disband, and reform as necessary. The whole MAPS team reconvenes to celebrate the passage from one year to the next, when it is important to define a new direction, or when the student with special needs faces a challenge which the smaller groups cannot handle alone. Any member of the MAPS team can ask the rest of the group to meet.

Unit 4.4

Peer tutoring

Unit aim

To examine the possible benefits of peer tutoring.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Peers as Paired Reading Tutors'.
2. In small groups plan how you might try this approach in school. Consider how you might evaluate the effectiveness of such a project.
3. Carry out your pilot paired reading project in school.
4. Report your findings to your planning group. Agree a statement of advice for teachers wishing to use this approach based upon the experience of your group members. Present this statement to the rest of the course.

Evaluation issues

1. What have you learned from this project?
2. In what ways might you use the idea of pupils teaching pupils in other areas of schooling beyond reading?

Peers as paired reading tutors

One approach to peer tutoring involves pairs of children reading together. Sam Winter, who works in Hong Kong, described how this approach was used in one primary school:

'The class teacher of one of the two, fourth year classes asked the year group if there were any pupils who felt that they needed to help to improve their reading skills. Fourteen out of the 56 children responded positively. He then asked the remainder if any of them would like to volunteer to act as tutors, bearing in mind that they would need to learn a special tutoring method and then use it three times a week during break times over a six weeks' period. Twenty-four children volunteered.

Each of the tutees was then asked to select a tutor from the list of volunteers. Several of the latter were left over, of course, and one then asked if he could be a tutee and select someone to help him. Consequently the project began with 15 pairs all of whom, not surprisingly, were the same sex. Those who volunteered to be tutees were without exception comparatively poor readers. A number of them had been receiving attention from the visiting remedial teacher for several years. Those who volunteered to be tutors were drawn from the entire ability spectrum. In one particular pair the tutor had scored slightly below his partner on a recent standardized text.

I trained the tutors to use paired reading techniques, summarized by the following rules:

Reading together

1 Read aloud with your partner, letting him set the pace and sharing his/her book.

2 If your partner hesitates or makes a mistake then tell him the correct word, and make him repeat it before continuing.

Reading alone

3 If your partner signals (perhaps by a knock) that he wants to read alone, then stop reading aloud and follow the story.

4 If your partner hesitates or makes a mistake whilst reading alone, then tell him the correct word, make him repeat it, and then read aloud with him until he next signals.

At all times

5 Whenever your partner reads a difficult word or sentence, corrects his own mistake or signals he can read on his own, then praise him.

Tutors listened to a description of paired reading, watched a demonstration with a volunteer child acting the role of tutee and then practised the technique with their partner whilst the teacher and I went round the class, monitoring performance and offering constructive feedback. After the practice session tutors were given a handout summarizing the five rules described above and a simple record sheet upon which tutors were asked to record the page number reached at the end of each session.

Tutor-tutee pairs worked for three 15-minute break-time sessions per week for six weeks, during which period there were no unjustified absences by either group. Whenever circumstances made a session impossible for a particular pair, time was made up later. Each pair therefore complete 18 sessions, representing 4 hours of tuition, all of which took place in an ordinary classroom.

After the project had ended all 30 children were invited to take part in a discussion which focused upon their experience of both paired reading and peer tutoring. Tutees said they preferred to be helped by classmates rather than by teachers or parents. A number argued that they could read better and learn faster alongside fellow pupils. Tutors indicated that they had enjoyed being placed in a responsible position. Some added that the reading they had done alongside their tutees had been to the benefit of their own reading ability.

The class teachers reported gains in reading skills, as well as confidence and interest in reading, for a number of pupils who took part in the project. One reported that some of his pupils seemed a little more confident in other subject areas and that the atmosphere in his class was more harmonious than previously in that academic year.'

Unit 4.5

Partnership teaching

Unit aim

To consider the idea of 'partnership teaching' as a means of supporting teachers as they try out new ways of working.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Partnerships in the Classroom'.
2. In small groups consider how the idea of partnerships might be used. What sorts of difficulties do you anticipate? How might these be overcome?
3. Plan a partnership teaching project with a colleague in your school. Write a report on the project describing what happened.
4. Report your findings to the other course members.

Evaluation issues

1. How might you use the idea of partnership teaching to help you develop your own teaching?
2. How might you overcome possible difficulties?

Partnerships in the classroom

Systematic approaches to encourage teacher-teacher collaboration can be particularly powerful in helping individuals to develop aspects of their classroom practice. For example:

1 *Peer observation*

Peer observation refers to the observation of one's teaching by another (usually a friendly colleague). It is now fairly well established that teachers learn best from other teachers, and take criticism most easily from this source. It is ideal if teachers in peer groups can act as observers for each other, and this mutual exchange of roles quickly breaks down barriers and encourages collaboration.

The observer can play any number of differing roles. She/he can observe a lesson in general, focus on specific aspects of the teaching and talk to pupils all during one observation period. In addition, the observer may note incidents that the teacher would ordinarily miss.

The major advantages of peer observation are that it lightens the teacher's problem of analysis and ensures, through the use of an observer, more unbiased and objective data gathering. Although it may sometimes be difficult to obtain the services of an observer, their ability to be flexible and to focus on a wide variety of teaching situations outweighs that disadvantage.

2 *Clinical supervision*

Clinical supervision is a technique that has enjoyed much popularity in North America, where it was developed as a method of supervising student teachers, but it is also suited for use in classroom research situations. It is a more structured form

of peer observation that focuses on a teacher's performance utilizing a three phase approach to the observation of teaching events.

The three essential phases of the clinical supervision process are a planning conference, classroom observation, and a feedback conference. The planning conference provides the observer and teacher with an opportunity to reflect on the proposed lesson, and this leads to a mutual decision to collect observational data on an aspect of the teacher's teaching. During the classroom observation phase, the observer observes the teacher teach and collects objective data on that aspect of teaching they agreed upon earlier. It is in the feedback conference that the observer and teacher share the information, decide on possible actions (if necessary), and often plan to collect further observational data. It is important to realize that to be effective all three phases of the process need to be gone through systematically.

3 *Peer coaching*

Peer coaching is a teacher-to-teacher interaction aimed at improving teaching. Because of its personal nature, a climate of trust needs to be established. Partners select each other and work on problems voluntarily; they cannot feel that their confidentiality will be breached. The primary purpose of peer coaching is support, not evaluation; thus, peers are more appropriate partners than administrators in this professional growth scheme.

There are several entry points for peer coaching: a teacher might pose a problem to another teacher; a school might identify a curriculum change that requires new teaching skills; or a department might reorganise students. All of these events could precipitate meetings between teachers to decide on a response. These meetings generally serve as pre-conferences to identify concerns and map strategies for working on the problem together. Generally, once a concern has been identified, the peer, acting as coach, arranges a time to conduct an observation, gathers descriptive data, and confers with the teacher. The coach's role is that of a facilitator or supporter; he or she works with the teacher to focus on the concern, plan improvement strategies, and follow through in the classroom. A variety of observation instruments can be used, depending on the nature of the problem and the desire of the teacher being observed. All data gathered becomes the property of the teacher observed.

Some issues to consider

In developing partnerships a number of issues need to be considered. These include:

1 How do I choose a partner?

A partner could be:

- a departmental colleague;
- another colleague from elsewhere in the school;
- an advisory colleague.

2 What makes an effective partnership?

- Agreed procedures and ethical rules
- Respect and equality
- Time for discussion
- A sense of humour

Finally, it is important to note that partnerships are solely for purposes of professional development. Consequently they should be conducted quite separately from processes of formal teacher evaluation.

Unit 4.6

Sharing classrooms

Unit aim

To consider ways of working collaboratively with other adults in the classroom.

Activities

1 Read the discussion material, 'Help in the Classroom'.

2 In small groups consider the implications of one of the following pairs of adults sharing a classroom:

- a class teacher and an unqualified assistant supporting a child with a disability;
- a maths teacher and a special needs support teacher;
- two teachers, one of whom is a senior member of staff;
- a teacher who has a parent volunteer helping.

3 As a group list all the difficulties you can see arising in this situation. Work out some strategies for overcoming the situational difficulties you have noted.

4 Report your findings to the other groups.

Evaluation issues

1 Do the issues you have discussed arise in other situations where adults share classrooms?

2 What actions will you take as a result of these activities?

Help in the classrooom

In attempting to create positive learning conditions for all pupils it can be very helpful to have additional people to work alongside the teacher. These may be pupils acting as peer tutors to younger children; parents who have volunteered to give up some of their spare time; classroom assistants assigned to individual pupils deemed to have special educational needs; or, as is increasingly the trend in secondary education, teachers who formerly worked with small withdrawal groups who are now expected to provide in-class support teaching.

The existence of any additional help is clearly of potential benefit, not least in arranging the classroom in ways that take more account of pupils as individuals. It can simply provide a little more of that precious commodity, time. However, additional help can create additional difficulties. Let us look at some of the possibilities.

First, it can have negative effects on learning outcomes. For example, situations can arise where the presence of a classroom helper of some kind means that certain pupils are helped to complete their assignments without fully understanding what they involve or facing the problems they pose. Consequently little or no significant learning may take place. The helper may also be a source of distraction, with pupils being interrupted as they attempt to carry out their tasks. One of us recently overheard a teenage girl in a science lesson express her irritation at the presence of a support teacher by saying, 'If you would just leave us alone we would be able to get on with our work'.

Support in the classroom can also have damaging effects on attitudes. Pupils identified in front of their classmates as 'needing special help' may well feel distressed. They might also develop a sense of dependence on their helper, feeling little or no need to co-operate with other pupils in the class. It may also be the case that the teacher in charge of the class feels that there is no need to take responsibility for those children who have the benefit of outside support.

Our greatest concern about the presence of some form of additional help in the classroom, however, is that this may serve to maintain the status quo. One of the positive roles of pupils who experience difficulties is to give the teacher some feedback that decisions that have been made about objectives, tasks and activities, or classroom arrangements are in some sense inappropriate for at least some members of the class. If such difficulties are masked by the intervention of other adults who occupy the pupils' attention, or help them complete their assigned tasks, the teacher may be prevented from becoming aware of significant information that could be used to improve the way the class is conducted.

How might these difficulties be avoided? How can we gain the full benefits of any extra help that is available? In general terms the way forward is to aim for a co-operative working arrangement, where both adults in a classroom have an agreement as to how it is to operate, what their aims are and what roles each will play.

All of this takes time. Time is needed beforehand for planning and, indeed, afterwards in order to reflect on and learn from the experience of working together. When it works well, a major benefit of any co-operative teaching arrangement is the professional stimulation that occurs as a result of sharing ideas and evaluating outcomes with a colleague.

Work by Gary Thomas in England led to some interesting accounts of ways in which the presence of more than one adult in the classroom might be used to best effect, particularly in responding to those pupils experiencing some difficulties in learning. He suggests that the aim should be to ensure that all members of a class are actively engaged in the tasks set by the teacher whilst at the same time providing the maximum amount of help possible to individual pupils.

One particular strategy he recommends is known as 'room management'. It was developed originally for use by personnel working with children and adults who have severe learning difficulties. The basic idea is that adults working in a co-operative setting are assigned specific roles during what is referred to as the 'activity period'—a specific period of time, usually of about one hour. The roles are as follows:

- *individual helper:* is responsible for taking individual or small groups of pupils for short periods of intensive help;
- *activity manager:* attempts to keep the rest of the class involved in the tasks and activities that have been set;
- *mover:* aims to maintain the flow of activity by dealing with matters relating to resources. In a well-organized class these duties are usually delegated to the pupils.

Evidence from work in primary schools suggests that children's rate of engagement in the tasks that have been set can be increased by up to 30 per cent as a result of using this type of room management strategy.

Unit 4.7

Parents as partners

Unit aim

To consider ways of establishing working partnerships with parents.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Collaboration with Parents'.
2. Prepare an account of the current policy for working with parents in a school you know well. What are its strengths? What are areas that need developing?
3. Share your account with other members of the course. In small groups agree some recommendations as to how collaboration with parents could be developed.
4. Report your recommendations to the whole course.

Evaluation issues

1. In the light of these discussions what strategies might you adopt to develop better links with the parents of children in your class?
2. What support might you seek in developing these approaches?

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Collaboration with parents

Regular contact and good relationship between school staff and parents can assist a child's educational progress. The communication between school and home is sometimes more difficult when children have difficulties in talking. Contact may take a variety of forms as shown on diagram overleaf. Some of these are briefly described below:

1 *Consultation*

Before a child starts school and at regular intervals throughout the school years, parents' views should be sought by discussion at meetings, questionnaires and any other appropriate method. In some countries, parents are now involved in the formulation of a plan for dealing with children's special educational needs which determine the services they receive. Annual reviews are held at which the child's progress is reviewed and parents are always invited to attend these meetings.

2 *Home–school notebooks*

A popular method of establishing communication between parents and the class teacher in some schools is to put a few notes in a 'diary' about the most significant events of the day. The diary travels back and forth between home and school, with the child, enabling communication to take place about instances of learning, illnesses, etc. These tend to be used with children who cannot easily communicate this information themselves. It is important that both teacher and parent do not feel obliged to write something in the diary, when they have nothing special to write about or there is a danger of it becoming time-wasting and losing value.

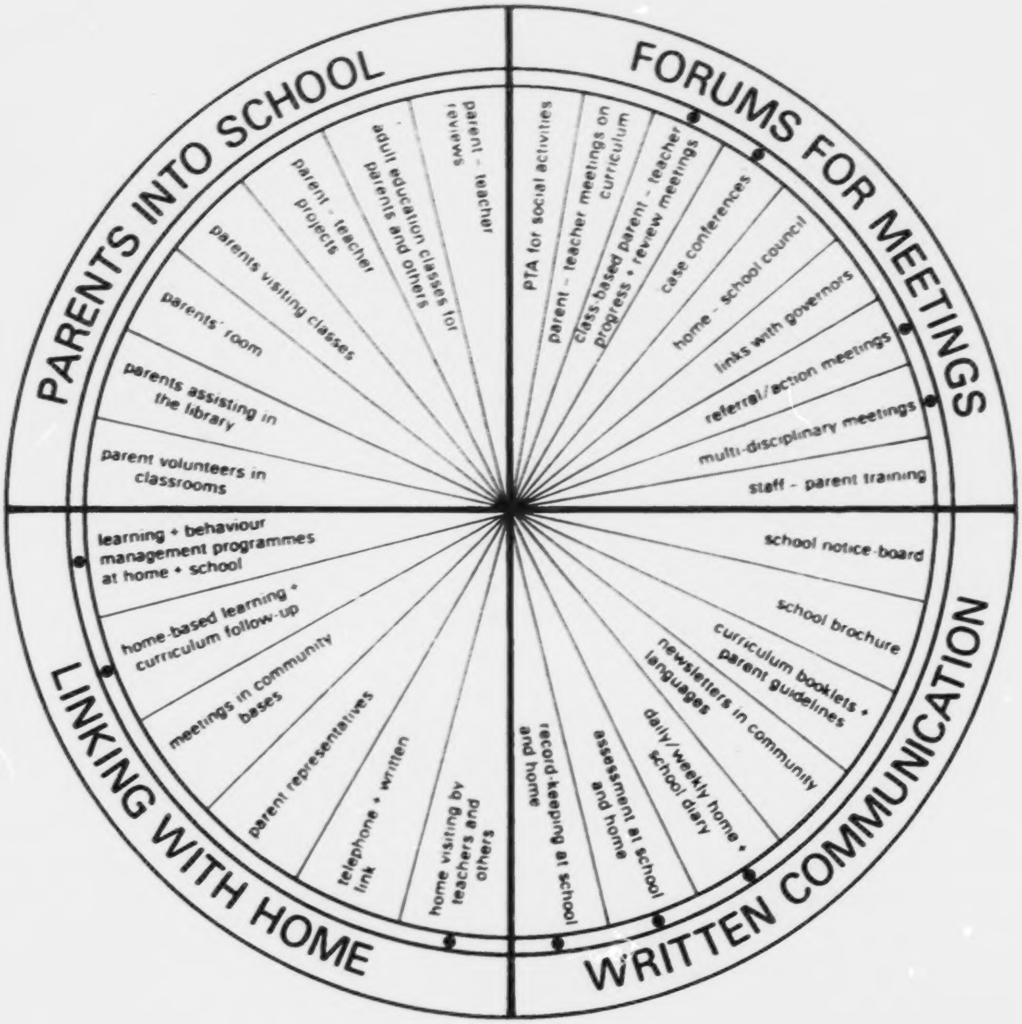
3 *Written reports*

The annual review mentioned above, provides one opportunity for teachers to give parents a written report on a child's progress. This report should be detailed and clear so that the parents can easily review any changes, however small. Depending on the circumstances of the family, it might also indicate areas in which work at home could complement that being done at school. Actual examples of records of teaching carried out in school might be included. The report should conclude with a clear indication of future priorities.

4 *School documents*

Many schools have a school brochure which is sent out to parents before the child begins school. In addition, there may be curriculum or policy documents which are sent out to parents at some time. It is important to consider other methods of communicating this information to parents who have difficulties reading or for whom the language in which the documents are written, is not their first language.

The Wheel: a programme of parental involvement


PARENTS INTO SCHOOL
parent - teacher reviews
adult education classes for parents and others
parent - teacher projects
parents visiting classes
parents' room
parents assisting in the library
parent volunteers in classrooms
FORUMS FOR MEETINGS
PTA for social activities
parent - teacher meetings on curriculum
class-based parent - teacher progress + review meetings
case conferences
home - school council
links with governors
referral/action meetings
multi-disciplinary meetings
staff - parent training
WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
school notice-board
school brochure
curriculum booklets + parent guidelines
newsletters in community languages
daily/weekly home + school diary
assessment at school and home
record-keeping at school and home
LINKING WITH HOME
home visiting by teachers and others
telephone + written link
parent representatives
meetings in community bases
home-based learning + curriculum follow-up
learning + behaviour management programmes at home + school

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Source: Wolfendale, S. *Primary Schools and Special Needs*, London: Cassell, 1987.

Unit 4.8

Meeting parents

Unit aim

To consider ways in which meetings with parents can be used to encourage positive home school links.

Activities

1. Groups of approximately 5 are created. One member volunteers to play the role of parent; another member agrees to act as the observer.
2. 'Parents' are briefed outside the room. They are to visit school to raise a problem. Examples of problems might be:
   - My child does not like coming to school on Fridays.
   - My child cannot hear the teacher's instructions.
   - My child is being bullied in the playground.
   - My child is worrying about her reading.
   - My child says that the other children make fun of him in the playground.
3. Remaining group members plan for a visit from a parent. They do not know the purpose of this visit. They have not met this parent previously. One member is the Headteacher; the others are teachers.
4. During the 'meeting' the observer makes notes about what happens. At the end the observer gives feedback and the group discuss what has happened.

Evaluation issues

1. What have you learned from this activity?
2. How can meetings with parents be improved?

Unit 4.9

Community involvement

Unit aim

To consider ways of creating closer links between schools and the wider community.

Activities

1. Make a list of the strategies used by schools that you know to develop community links.
2. In small groups combine your lists by writing them on a large sheet of paper. Add to the total list any other suggestions you might like to make.
3. Compare the list created in your group with those developed by the others. Discuss the implications.

Evaluation issues

1. What are the main reasons for close links between schools and their communities?
2. What approaches can you develop in your own teaching to encourage better community involvement in school?

Unit 4.10

External agencies

Unit aim

To consider the role of external agencies in providing support to teachers.

Activities

1. Read the discussion material, 'Finding Help'
2. Write a list of the people and/or agencies that may be available to provide you with support.
3. In groups compare your lists and work out some recommendations as to how to make the best use of these people.
4. Report your recommendations to the rest of the course members.

Evaluation issues

1. How satisfied are you with the support you get from external agencies?
2. What steps can you take to improve this situation?

Finding help

There are many people whose work is not based in the school who might provide support for school staff. This includes teachers who specialize in working with pupils who have hearing or visual problems, physiotherapists, speech therapists, or advisory staff from the education service. Making the best possible use of this support requires careful planning. The class teacher may be required to co-ordinate the activities of these support staff who may come in and out of the classroom at various times during the week.

1 *Classroom based support*

The most effective methods of support seem to be those which involve the person giving support by working alongside the teacher in the classroom, rather than taking particular children out of the classroom to work with on an individual basis. This might be because it enables the teacher to observe and learn from the person giving support which might help them to apply the same general principles to another child's learning in the future. The support teacher can focus on one or more children to enable them to follow broadly the same work as the others or can assist with the whole group, enabling each teacher to spend more time with each child.

2 *Adapting teaching material*

The support teacher may meet with the class or subject teacher on a regular basis to plan work or look at the reading level of specific material in order to ensure that lessons will be accessible to all children in the group. The way the material is designed or printed may need to be considered, for example to ensure it can be read by pupils with visual difficulties or those with limited comprehension. Much work has been done in some countries using computers to access the curriculum to children experiencing difficulties.

3 *Adapting teaching strategies*

The support teacher may assist the subject teacher or class teacher to adapt their teaching methods. For example, the support teacher might suggest group activities which enable different pupils to contribute at different levels. The balance of group activities to individual work can be very important and might involve consideration of different ways of managing the classroom. The language used by the teacher may need adapting so that instructions are given in more than one way. Tasks may need breaking down into smaller steps and detailed recording of responses considered. The support teacher may make suggestions on any of these procedures.

4 *Staff development*

A major role of support staff may be in providing staff development for teachers, assistants and managers. The content of this work is likely to focus on the strategies and techniques described above. It may be a way of keeping school staff up to date with the latest research and developments, providing support for teachers doing research in their own schools or bringing staff from several schools together.

Unit 4.11

Practice and feedback

Unit aim

To provide an opportunity for participants to use sections of the UNESCO resource pack.

Activities

1 In pairs plan how you might use one of the units from the resource pack with the rest of the group. Remember the five approaches that are central to the thinking of the pack.

2 Present your session for the group.

3 At the end of the session all participants (including the two that led the activities) write their reflections in their journals.

4 Everybody makes positive comments about the session. Comments should begin with phrases such as:

- I enjoyed the way you . . .
- A positive feature of this session was . . .
- Next time you should . . .

No negative comments should be made.

Evaluation issues

1 What have you learned from this activity?

2 How might you use the resource pack in your workplace?

For further reading

JEFFREE, D. M. *The Education of Children and Young People who are Mentally Handicapped.* Paris, UNESCO, 1986. 70 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 1)

MITTLER, P.; MITTLER, H.; MC CONACHIE, H. *Working Together: Guidelines, for partnership between professionals and parents of children and young people with disabilities.* Paris, UNESCO, 1986. 63 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 2)

BAINE, D. *Testing and Teaching Handicapped Children and Youth in Developing Countries.* Paris, UNESCO, 1986. 63 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 3)

CENTRE OF TOTAL COMMUNICATION. *Education of Deaf Children and Young People.* Paris, UNESCO, 1987. 84 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 4)

LABREGERE, A. *Access by Young Handicapped Persons to Communication and Language.* Paris, UNESCO, 1987. 130 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 5)

HORTON, J. K. *Education of Visually Impaired Pupils in Ordinary Schools.* Paris, UNESCO, 1988. 129 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 6)

RYE, H.; SKJORTEN, M. D. *Children with Severe Cerebral Palsy: An Educational Guide.* Paris, UNESCO, 1989. 163 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 7)

O'TOOLE, B. J. *Guide to Community-based Rehabilitation Services.* Paris, UNESCO, 1991. 96 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 8)

CREALOCK, C.; KRONICK, D. *Children and Young People with Specific Learning Disabilities.* Paris, UNESCO, 1993. 82 pp. (Guides for Special Education No. 9)